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## **Dark Wolf**

“Unbelievable.”

Shambala said coldly as he stepped through the busy crowds. From the time he had met Shambala outside the stadium until now.....a frown had continued to crease his forehead. Annoyance was buried in his glances and voice. Because he had slept in, he was late for the time of the appointment. He had made a mistake. He had really committed a sin to die for. But he wasn’t so late that they missed the match so wasn’t it too much to keep being angry? Ark thought with pouted lips.

“I know and I’m sorry. I said I was sorry.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Aren’t you mad that I’m late? I’ll be careful next time so let’s just stop it here.”

Shambala stopped walking and stared at him.

“That’s right, it would be better to be careful about what you say. After all, there is no second time. Because I will stick a knife if you do it a second time in the tournament.”

It was not a joke. He had forgotten for a while, but originally he had met Shambala when he stabbed Ark in the back moments after he reconnected. After he didn’t like it, he was a user that could sneak up to someone and stab them while laughing. He had managed to become friendly with such a bloody guy. No, had they become familiar?

“Yes, yes. Aren’t you certain? Please leave it alone now.”

“Do you want to play?”

“I understand, I don’t want to be stuck with a petulant partner who would stab me with a knife.”

Ark muttered with a laugh. Shambala gave him a sharp look before breathing out a sigh.

“You’re really.....well, I got it. It is better to relax before a match rather than being tense. Because this tournament might be more difficult than expected.”

“Huh? More difficult?”

“Like I said before, the number of people who usually participate in an Evil Silrion tournament are around 200 people. But in this tournament.....there is something weird. From what I heard, the number of people who applied is at least 5 times more. That means around 1,000 people.

“1,000 people? Then even if 1 match has 2 people, that’s 500 matches?”

Ark’s mouth widened. However, Shambala shook his head and said.

“The number’s not significant.”

“There’s only one thing that increases when there is a number of entrants.”

“I guess. But although there have been a number of times when many people have showed up, they just increased the number of tournaments. If more than 100 people apply, than the tournament would be extended to 2~3 tournaments.

Well, he tried to think about that. It was a tournament method where half the number was expected to fail. So if 100 people applied than the tournament would continue until there was one winner. However, if over 500 people signed up than it would be extended to more tournaments.

“The problem is not the number of tournaments, but the level of the players.”

Shambala emphasized in a serious voice.

“In fact, I think this tournament is insignificant. Are you listening? Since the border of the Three Kingdoms was opened not too long ago, guilds have been flocking to Nagaran. Therefore the users with high odds of winning in the

Evil Silrion probably belonged to guilds. Therefore, the number of participants in this tournament with mediocre skills would be low.”

“Then all the players with skilled capabilities have gathered?”

“That’s right, the names on the application list are names that are known by everyone. Therefore, some abstained and were probably hoping to apply for a different one, but 1,000 people still remain. Can you approximately guess what I mean?”

The name of the participants in the Evil Silrion weren’t disclosed until the final registration. When the users weren’t confident in their skills, they resigned after the application list was revealed. The reason was simple. In the Evil Silrion, a system of ‘Victory Points’ existed. In other words the rank was decided by the number of victory points, just like in boxing. And of course, the higher the ranking, the more possible it was to receive suitable compensation. For example in the special tournament that had a supplementary prize, the reward was an item only sold at an exclusive store. Or there was also the right to purchase advanced game information at an affordable price.....the purpose of players coming to the Evil Silrion was to obtain those sorts of prizes. The reason Shambala originally joined the Evil Silrion was because of a job-related quest.

“Therefore, your score from the tournament could fall a lot. And if you resign after the first match begins, it is considered a loss and your points will fall. But if you resign after the registration list is announced, you won’t be able to apply for another tournament but your points won’t fall. If you subtract the players who aren’t confident in their skills from the attendance list, there would only be high level players left.”

“Say that again.”

Ark organized Shambala’s words.

“Because large guilds rushed to Nagaran, a lot of people joined the

tournament hoping for huge profits. Were they thinking of saving money from this?”

Shambala nodded.

“But the list of top ranked players being announced still doesn’t explain where 200 people abstained. There are two reasons I can think of. The first one is that the ones who remained and are unconfident would join forces. And the second reason is.....they want the supplementary reward even at the risk of losing their points.”

“That’s right.”

“Is it rare for a treasure map to be given as an supplementary prize in the Evil Silrion?”

Ark asked Shambala who shook his head.

“That’s what I don’t understand. Treasure maps are a common supplementary prize in the Evil Silrion. And there hasn’t been anyone who received a jackpot using the treasure map, it is an unpopular prize. That’s why I don’t understand why so many people have gathered just for the supplementary prize.”

An idea came to Ark after he had been folding his arms for a while. Ark had bought treasure maps several times but never found anything. Treasure maps could lead to items.

But what treasure? And how many items would be in the chest? He had grown up watching a cartoon where those that sought treasure from maps found it after much difficult and death. But the moment they opened the thick treasure chest, their expectations would turn to despair. Inside the treasure chest was at most 3~4 old jars, which didn’t even sell for 3 gold at the shops. However, it was good for Ark in its own way. He knew that maps could lead to unexpectedly high items. But if the treasure map led to a ridiculously high level hunting ground and if he happened to find empty boxes at the end then

there would be a lot of trouble. Even monsters level 300 could be disguised as a treasure chest, such as the time he was surprised by a mimic.....The words luck or unlucky were often used these days. Of course there was a chance of really big items being found, but the probability was too low to hang their dreams on it. So even if they found a treasure map, there was almost no one who would invest their time and intentionally go look for it. But people have gathered for the tournament where the prize was a map.

“Rumours that Magaro’s map must lead to the location of wonderful treasure or information that it is a quest related item must have spread.”

“That’s what I think as well.”

“Yes, but it will definitely become a little troublesome.”

Ark sighed and murmured. But then he shook his head and added in a decisive voice.

“But nothing has changed. It doesn’t matter how many opponents there are, we’ll just have to do the same as we planned. To win, no?”

“Do you have confidence?”

“Are you unconfident? Do you want to quit?”

Ark smiled as he glanced at Shambala.

“If you are being courageous while ignorant.....anyway I’m good. Because it is better than a partner who is depressed from the start. And you’re right. We just have to win using whatever method possible. I won’t let them catch my ankle so easily.”

“No matter what, we’ll return the favour.”

The Pairs Tournament will be held shortly so please register as soon as possible.If you do not register 10 minutes before the start then you will be automatically disqualified. Let me say it once again. The tournament will be held after 5 minutes. Participants please register.....

At that time, the voice of a NPC resonated everywhere through a magic loudspeaker.

“Let’s go, we still have to register.”

The front office of the management was crowded with people. In front of them was a large table showing the tournament. There was 5 minutes left until the final deadline. However, more than half was still unregistered. However once you’ve registered, your points would be slashed if you don’t win. Therefore, the people were waiting until the last minute to confirm all their rivals and determine if they should participate or not.

‘Are the people that have low quality equipment also hesitating to register?’

Ark looked at all the participants in his line of vision. Everyone met the minimum level requirement of 100. Just by skimming he could tell that some were powerful. In particular, it was the range of level of equipment they carried that made his mouth water. And it was the equipment that would play a crucial factor in the outcome. In the Evil Silrion, levels were insignificant in a fight. The reason is that the levels of all the participants are adjusted to the tournament level of 100. While it sounded like a fair rule, in fact it was quite the opposite. In the Evil Silrion, it was ‘only’ the level that was adjusted. However, it had no effect on skills and equipment. And if their skills and equipment was at the same level, then without a doubt they would be strong. Therefore, victory or defeat in the tournament was often decided by the efficiency of the skill level and the equipment. Of course, wouldn’t a user with proficient skills and better equipment have a higher rating? Between a user who had just reached level 100 and a level 200 user with a rare sword, the difference was like a bamboo sword against a real sword. In a

fight, the skill difference would also be important.

‘The absolute standard inside a game is level and equipment.’

That was the absolute truth.

“Sheesh, look at those pathetic figures checking out the notices.....”

Shambala looked scornful before turning to Ark.

“Anyway, we have never thought of resigning just because of our opponent. Let’s register and warm up before we are pushed. Because eyes would be concentrated on us when registering, please wear a mask for the time being.”

“Mask?”

Ark repeated incredulously. Then Shambala’s forehead wrinkled.

“You, don’t tell me.....didn’t prepare a mask?”

“What do you mean by a mask?”

“Oh my god, I never thought you would be this ignorant!”

Shambala shook his head with a tired look. Ark looked around with a face that showed he didn’t understand. Come to think of it, he had a strange feeling since he entered the office. It was strange when he came in, but he didn’t pay that much attention to it.

But when he listened to Shambala’s words, he figured out the identity of the mysterious feeling. Except for the authorities, everyone gathered at the office was wearing a mask. Now, Ark flinched and asked with a worried look.

“Ho, is a mask needed to fight in the tournament?”

“No, your appearance doesn’t matter so it is unrelated to that. But it is better to be prepared if possible. Especially in this tournament.....”

Shambala scratched his head.

“The rewards for the winner and supplementary prize are often mixed with

rare items. There are a lot of people that would desire the item. You know what I mean? For example, there are a large number of defeated participants watching from among the spectators that would desire the items.”

“Ah, I see!”

Ark said with a flash. Why had he never thought about that? One of the reasons players would participate in a tournament even though it wasted time was because they desired the supplementary prize. There were thousands of items among those cases.....which might be the goal of the user. No, it’ll be the target. And an uneasy life would begin after the prize was awarded. Treasure calls for blood. It wasn’t a word that was applied in reality.

“You must be really brave or ignorant.....didn’t you even think about it a little bit? The people who appear in the Evil Silrion are experts in PVP. Unless it is 1 on 1. You might be able to hold out if they jump you. However if they are a member of a guild, there is a 100% chance that you would be jumped by a group. That is why everyone hides their face with a mask.”

The brave and ignorant Ark raised an objection.

“But they would know my name anyway.”

“You idiot, did you think about why the list of users who registered hasn’t been shown yet? The final registration is where you make the decision to participate, but it is also the procedure to register the ring name of the contestants.”

“Ring name?”

“Yes, it is another name that is only used in the Evil Silrion.

Understandably, why the fight starts then the crowd cannot interfere in any way. This means that there is no way to discover the information to use the scrolls or a variety of magic. So if you use a mask and a ring name, then your personal information would be thoroughly hidden. Once he had applied for the battle, he instantly disconnected so Ark didn’t understand the situation.

“Unbelievable. The players who flocked to this tournament are interested in the supplementary prize.....so if you become the winner without covering your face, chaotic players would swarm like bees.”

‘That would be a problem.....’

Now Ark’s face became serious. Why didn’t he think about those things? It was not simply a matter of winning the prizes. Ark did not want to attract the attention of other players by default. Wasn’t that the reason why he didn’t register new dungeons discovered in the Hall of Fame? And it wasn’t just 1~2 people, wouldn’t thousands of spectators would be crammed into the arena to watch the tournament? And they were aiming for the supplementary prize?

‘I already had trouble with my bad relationship with Andel, but if I win and receive the secret map of Magaro.....?’

He could immediately imagine it. Shambala looked at the sandglass which showed the registration deadline and was annoyed.

“Are you indifferent about your appearance when registering? If you show your face when fighting then your true identity would be revealed. Hell, and there is no time to go and buy a mask because you were late.....you don’t possibly have something that could cover your face do you?”

“Such a thing.....”

Ark breathed out a sigh. Rattle rattle, an idea floated in his head.

‘Yes, if I have that then it isn’t necessary to use a mask!’

“Shambala, just wait. I’ll be right back.”

“What? Are you trying to buy it now? I told you, there’s no time to go out.”

“I’m not going to buy a mask. Just wait for 1 minute.”

“Now, wait a minute! Hey, Ark!”

Ark left the office with Shambala’s voice drifting behind him. Most of the

participants were already gathered in the management office, so the hallway was quiet. After entering a deep corner, Ark looked around him.

‘Okay, no one is around?’

“Transformation!”

A black aura emitted from the pith. The black paint felt like slime as it crept over Ark and covered him.

-The Raccoon’s Pith’s special option ‘Transformation’ has been activated.

Yes, Ark was wearing the magical helmet that he obtained from the Underground World! It was the Raccoon’s Pith that allowed him to use the special ‘transformation’ that had been a part of the raccoon clan for ages.

‘This is the first time I’ve just ‘Transformation’ since I got it.....’

Nevertheless, he somehow knew how to use it. The black slime covered Ark and a new window popped up. It looked like the race, gender and appearance setup that appeared when he first connected to the game.

‘Should I make my completely different appearance look good? Anyway, the reality is that I don’t really care. But having an outrageous impression while fighting isn’t bad.’

There was no time to demonstrate an artistic sense. Ark gave a straight answer every time the menu came up and created a new character. A character that looked a little evil was created but that didn’t matter. Once he finished the setup, the black slime started to change Ark’s appearance. Ark changed and he looked at his unusual form. His face protruded out and his arms and legs were thick. He was over 30 cm tall and his hands were swollen like a balloon while his feet were as hard as rock.

‘It was made roughly, but once seen it appears plausible?’

Ark nodded in satisfaction and went back to the office. Then he entered through the door.

“Huk, what, what the?”

One player unintentionally forced his head backwards and tried to hide as he passed. The following people turned their heads as well.

“What, what the? That man is?”

“No way.....it can’t be a monster.....then that is a beast species?”

“No, it must be a joke. How can there be beasts in the capital of the Schudenberg kingdom?”

“Haven’t you heard about the relaxed border restrictions?”

Everyone’s eyes were concentrated on one man. The person who walked through the crowd as they parted for him like the Red Sea was Ark! He was twice the height of an average person and his chest and arms were twice the normal thickness, and every time he moved it was like his muscles were rocks. It was an overwhelming presence indeed! However, people weren’t surprised because of that. His 2 metres tall muscular body was covered by black hair. But was that all? Right now, his pupils gleamed red like blood floated in it. Large fangs protruded out of his mouth as his eyes stuck out. The name that came to mind at his surprising appearance was Lycan.....also known as werewolves. However, it wasn’t possible for a monster that was a werewolf to appear in the middle of Selebrid. If so, the answer must be a beast clan. Among them, the wolf tribe was the one that the user selected. However, the Wolf tribe only started in the Sinius Principality. Therefore, users in the Schudenberg Kingdom haven’t seen anyone from the wolf clan yet.

‘Surprisingly, the mood isn’t bad?’

Normally Ark didn't like the interest of other users. But feeling such interest when he was in disguise wasn't bad. At the attention of thousands of players, Ark started to laugh.

“Kkurururu”

It was an intimidating sound that emerged from his mouth. He thought it was an attractive smile, but the people looking at it didn't seem to think so. The faces of the users were stiff. Some female users were also avoiding his eyes.

‘Huhuhu, was my smile that powerful?’

When Ark changed appearance, the part of his brain with taste disappeared. Anyway, there was no time to be playing around. He looked around for Shambala who had also been staring at Ark with surprised eyes. Then he flinched and retreated as Ark approached.

“Kkururu, did you wait long? Let's quickly finish registering.”

When he opened his mouth, a snarl naturally came out. Shambala tilted his head with a puzzled expression and asked.

“Are you.....?”

Shambala stuttered before he closed his mouth. Shambala was a veteran in the Evil Silrion. Even when he was confused, he didn't reveal the original name in a place where the attention of users was concentrated on them. Ark noticed the situation and nodded.

“That's right”

“Really.....you definitely have the ability to shock people. Although you only disappeared for a moment, you became this.....no, it doesn't matter. I don't know how you did it but I'll hear it at a more convenient time once we finish the registration.

Shambala dragged Ark to the NPC. The NPC was also surprised by Ark's appearance as a wolf species. When a smile stretched his face, it was an

expression that caused intimidation. But after Ark's information was confirmed, a sigh of relief was released.

"Uh, you have the right to participate. It doesn't matter what form you use to participate since the entrants have freedom.....but it is really unique. Yes, registration has been finished. By the way, it seems like this is your first appearance. What ring name do you want? Please note that you cannot change the ring name once it is registered in the Evil Silrion."

"Dark Wolf."

His ring name had appeared when he confirmed his final appearance.

"Dark Wolf. Yes, it has been registered. And your partner.....Ah, you're Blue Sword.

"Blue sword!"

At the NPC's words, mutters broke out among the users who were watching. The disturbance spread through the crowd like a fire.

"Isn't Blue Sword the hero of that rumour?"

"The powerhouse that went straight into the top 10 ranking in the individual match?"

"Isn't he the one who recorded 37 straight wins?"

"Damn it, he hadn't appeared in a tournament for a while....."

Unexpectedly, Shambala was a celebrity in the Evil Silrion. But indeed, it wasn't that impossible. Ark also knew Shambala's skills. In New World, there weren't that many people who could fight Shambala in a 1 on 1 match and win. Moreover, in the Evil Silrion users competed with the rule of level equalization. It was natural that Shambala was known to the public. But when the interest in Shambala rose, the interest in Ark fell immediately.

"Yes, the wolf probably isn't that big a deal compared to his appearance."

“That’s right, because he is a trivial person compared to Blue Sword. There is no fair way of winning the pairs tournament with that.”

“Then it is worth a try.”

“If it was a solo match I would have no confidence but since it is a pairs one.....”

The fact that he was acquaintances with Shambala made it worse. It seemed like he only accompanied him to allow Shambala to enter the tournament. Therefore those who knew his power disregarded Ark. Ark’s frown steadily deepened causing Shambala to laugh and whisper.

“Are you actually listening to all this talk?”

“Kkururu, I don’t care. The results will be seen soon anyway.”

“That’s right. But be vigilant because the Evil Silrion tournament isn’t a game that you can be careless with.”

Ark was angry at Shambala’s words. When it was a 1 on 1 PVP, Ark was confident. Shambala hadn’t seen his skills since they met up again. However, Shambala was treating him like a newbie and it offended his pride. With a hot temper, Ark opened his mouth.

“Hmm, is that Blue Sword that great?”

Suddenly a voice mocked from the back of the room. Shambala turned his head and flinched as he frowned.

“You’re.....Jewel!”

The other participants flinched at Shambala’s voice and paid attention. The two people wore a magician and archer outfit. They were also covering their faces with a mask that was carved with a five star design. People wore masks and used ring names to disguise their actual appearance, but in the tournament it was the mask and ring name that allowed participants to recognize their opponents. Although equipment items would frequently

change, it was rare for a mask to be replaced. Shambala also used the shape of the pattern engraved to figure out the masked opponent's name. Jewel laughed and nodded.

“You remembered.”

“There’s no way I would forget.”

“I thought it was impossible when I heard the ring name Blue Sword, but it is you. Have you developed your skills while I was in a different area? Or are the other guys just pathetic?”

“.....”

Shambala glared silently. Then Jewel turned to look at the tournament table before talking sarcastically.

“Let’s see, did you say Blue Sword and Dark Wolf? The 14th match? So you would meet us in the finals. Lucky you. Fortunately, you can become runner ups.”

“Kkururu, these children, what are they talking about?”

Ark growled. Normally when someone changes shape, even the character would immediately change. But Shambala just pulled Ark’s arm and shook his head.

“Dark Wolf, it isn’t necessary for you to deal with them.”

Jewel laughed and nodded.

“A person with experience is slightly better. They know better after having me as an opponent.”

“.....Don’t think that I’m the same as before.”

“Of course. But I expect to have the same fun as before. Come to the finals with your developed skills. I would be happy to step on you this time as well.”

Jewel laughed before returning to his original spot.

“Damn, what was that just now? The five star design. Jewel has a five star pattern drawn on his mask.”

“Hell, a pioneer is participating.”

“There goes my win. I’m going to postpone my registration.”

The participants sighed before gradually disappearing. Ark was puzzled at the unfamiliar words and asked.

“What the? Why would everyone do that? And what is the pioneer thing?”

“They’re beta testers.”

Shambala said. Ark also knew the words beta tester. In the past, in order to check the various systems of the online game prior to commercialization, they would pick a handful of people for the closed beta test. And New World also had a beta test before commercialization as well. A pioneer was the name of the players who participated in the test. The beta testing period for New World was two months. Of course, the raised characters of the beta testers were deleted before commercialization. It was a measure of fairness for the new users. However, they had a head start because their know-how and accumulated information couldn’t be deleted. They commercialized their exclusive information and new users couldn’t even compare to their speed of growth.

“After one month, the difference between the pioneers with commercialization and the other users was a difference of more than 40 levels. And of course, they monopolized all the early quests and rare items. But most of them started gathering in higher level hunting areas.....”

“Have you fought with a pioneer?”

Shambala replied to Ark’s question with an irritated voice.

“My record for the Evil Silrion is 37 wins and 2 losses. Of my 2 losses in the

Evil Silrion, the first one was to Jewel.”

“Are his skills that great?”

“His skills are competent but.....”

Shambala sighed and shook his head.

“The biggest problem is the difference in equipment. They’re the ones with the most unique items. The level of basic attack and defense is completely different. There are also a lot of special options so you don’t know which one would be used. That makes it a challenging opponent.”

“These guys have suddenly reappeared? The situation has become more twisted.”

Really, nothing could be easily solved. The participants had suddenly increased by several times and the pioneers unexpectedly showed up..... he didn’t know what to do to make the situation better. But Shambala muttered with a motivated expression.

“It has worked out well. I won’t have another weak encounter.”

Shambala said it like that. Suddenly the horn rang and a broadcast was heard.

-That was the deadline for the final registration. The 186th Pairs Tournament will soon commence.

The determined expressions of the users waiting for the next match were seen, and there was a heavy atmosphere in the waiting room. And occasionally Ark would hear audible shouting and cries from the passageway, causing anxious eyes to flick to the wall with the tournament on the other side. Was this how athletes felt before they competed in a mixed martial arts fight? He had to just sit back and wait for the next fight even though his body was tense and sweaty. It was to the extent that he couldn’t hear it when they broadcast his ring name in the hallway. He felt a strange feeling for the first time. Actually, Ark wasn’t tense at all until the final registration. This was a game. It was just an event inside the game. That was what he thought.

However when he entered the player anteroom, that immediately changed.

The determined expressions of the users waiting for the next match were seen, and there was a heavy atmosphere in the waiting room. And occasionally Ark would hear audible shouting and cries from the passageway, causing anxious eyes to flick to the wall with the tournament on the other side. Was this how athletes felt before they competed in a mixed martial arts fight? He had to just sit back and wait for the next fight even though his body was tense and sweaty. It was to the extent that he couldn't hear it when they broadcast his ring name in the hallway.

“What are you doing? Come out faster!”

It was only after Ark heard Shambala's voice that he stood in surprise. He walked stiffly down the hall, with his heart pounding faster.

Clink, Kkiiik!

The thick steel doors soon parted to the left and right. Ark exited through the doors onto the field with determined eyes. But all he did was look around. Although he had heard the report, he couldn't possibly imagine the real picture. His range of vision narrowed and it felt like he was in the dark. Then, all of a sudden he heard a sound like lightning striking in the sky.

-Well, now it is the 7th match. This time, the players that will fight are the 13th team Justin and Dior against the 14th team Dark Wolf and Blue Sword.

Ark jumped and lifted his head. There were odd objects floating over the stadium. Dozens of eyeballs were linked to a round circular object. It was a magic seeing eye that gave commentary on the game. The echoing voice rang out onto the field from a mouth below it.

Please welcome and applaud the  
brave warriors!

When the announcer's introduction was over, the stadium was filled with loud cries. It wasn't for him so Ark timidly took a deep breath before

withdrawing to the side. “Wah ah ah!”

The popularity of Shambala was unthinkable. In the Evil Silrion, most of the spectators who bet money on winning or losing would watch the tournament. They were naturally interested in the warriors with a high winning percentage, but the higher the chances of victory, the lower the profit would be. However, it is small odds so many people would bet. This meant that the players who would give profit were clear. But that wasn’t the only reason for Shambala’s popularity. Even though it was a martial arts game, the system of Evil Silrion meant that fighting depended on equipment and skills. However unlike the other users, Shambala was famous for showing powerful martial arts. Therefore, there were quite a few pure fans. They all rose from their seats and shouted at Shambala’s appearance.

“Blue Sword, this time I also walked to you!”

“Take care of the hottest fight!”

“Blue Sword oppa, please look over here!”

Even placards saying the Oppa troops were seen. On the other hand, cynical comments flowed about Ark.

“Hey, Blue Sword. Did you take a dog to fight this time?”

“If you cause Blue Sword difficulty then I’ll grab your ankle!”

“Dark Wolf, don’t pay any attention to the nonsense shouted by the crowd.”

“Eh? Uh-huh.”

Ark carelessly answered but he couldn’t even understand what Shambala was talking about. The reason was that he couldn’t hear Shambala’s voice above the noise from the crowd.

It was reasonable. In fact, Ark had never been in front of so many people in his whole life. In school he spent time as the cleaning supervisor and even though he learnt taekwondo, he had never gone to a match. He never even

had a dream of making announcements in front of other people. Therefore, he was surprisingly timid in the corner. Then Ark was suddenly dropped into the stadium where thousands of spectators gathered. Thanks to that, Ark felt a sense of tension so extreme it was almost like a panic attack. Ark hadn't even been aware of his weakness and now he was here. During the event quest he had only led dozens of users while he commanded hundreds of raccoons in the Underground World. But most of them were NPCs, while the spectators were mainly users.

Even if the appearance was similar, the difference was huge.

'It's terrible.'

But since Shambala didn't know that, an exclamation rose in his heart.

'He's changed into someone who acts from a Korean War veteran. And he doesn't seem to hear my voice or the audience anymore. Is he concentrating to such a degree?'

Although he thought Ark was just concerned and nervous about his surroundings, the actual situation was different to what was in Shambala's head. Because Shambala never even considered that Ark would have a panic attack. Meanwhile, the forms of two users were shown from the other side exit. Justin and Dior. Justin was a warrior armed in steel armour while Dior was a magician with a robe. They were a group that was quite strong in the Evil Silrion, so they also received many cheers.

-Okay, now we will draw the lots!

Soon the eyes of the circular object rolled round and round. And after a while, the pupils all changed to green.

-The swamp has been selected for this match in the tournament! Then let's begin!

Ku-Kung!

At the same time, there was a roaring sound and the tournament changed to a completely different world. Green plants started forming while the swamp reached their ankles.

How had the entire stadium managed to be replaced? Well, he didn't even want to know. After all, it was a dynamic game in progress so strategies that planned for different terrains must be necessary. It was an interesting system, and it quickly released Ark from his mental state.

“What, what the? Where are we?”

Ark scratched his head and looked around surprised. He didn't understand why he was surrounded by lush forests with his ankle locked in a swamp. At that time, the voice of the magician was heard from the other side.

“Chain of delusion!”

Kkieeeek! There was an unearthly sound effect as a ghostly object flew off. The attack by the magician started the active fight commentary.

-The magician has used a long-ranged magic as a pre-emptive attack. When hit by the chain of delusion, they won't be able to move for a while. It is just a few seconds, but that could be deadly in a fighting tournament. But because it is a slow attack, the chances that it would hit are low. It is some kind of warning shot?

“Hung, the shape shown isn't that creative?”

Shambala laughed and quickly moved his body. The repeated movements were so light that it looked like he was warping. This was due to Shambala's evasion skill Blink! Shambala used the movement to avoid the magic attack while taking out his weapon. A blue aura was ejected from the dagger, which was the Saint Assassin profession weapon ‘Black Frost Blade’ that Ark previously had. Incidentally, Shambala had gotten the ring name Blue Sword from his dagger. Shambala's mouth had the same cold smile as the dagger.

“Huhuhu, trying to take care of us with such low grade magic.....eeek?”

The smile disappeared from Shambala's mouth. While he had avoided the attack, Ark was struggling against the chains of delusion wrapped around him.

"No, no-way that guy....."

It was then that Shambala noticed Ark's condition. However, it was already too late. When Ark hadn't expected a magic attack, Dior was delighted and called out a long order.

"It took! Well that guy was just a scarecrow. The cursed soul that was abandoned in a deep, dark place, come out and let your fury curse everything in your path!"

"That order.....Dior is a necromancer?

Shambala urgently ran up to Dior. However it was a pairs match and Justin, Dior's partner, wasn't just watching. Justin immediately raised his shield and rushed Shambala. With an intense clash, Shambala was pushed back a few steps. Shambala's face was contorted with frustration.

'Hell! This child is strangely huge.....the warrior was doping!'

A warrior could dope themselves with a potion that would raise their stats. During this tournament, there was a rule that consumption items were prohibited. However, there was one blind spot. During the match you couldn't use a consumption potion but it was possible to use it before the match! Justin had drugged himself with a huge amount just before the game started. He raised his stamina by 20% using the 'Troll Elixir,' his strength by 15 using 'Lion Power,' his attack and defense was raised by 30 thanks to 'Troll Leap,' for 5 minutes his health was restored by 10 every 20 seconds thanks to the 'Holy water of revival'.....if he was in the Olympics then he would be immediately disqualified for taking drugs. Thanks to such drugs, Justin's arena level of 100 was raised to around level 130~140.Indeed, the drug's power was awesome. Every time Justin wielded his sword, Shambala

was pushed back a few metres. Meanwhile, Dior's spell was completed.

“Possession of Bing!

At the moment, a huge ghost hit Ark's form. His body stiffened before a message window popped up.

-You were hit with ‘Possession of Bing.’

<For 3 minutes you will move according to the caster's will>

Ark tried to struggle against the flashing spirit. However, it was already too late and the voice of the magic eye was heard.

-Ah, the Necromancer's skill Possession of Bing was completed! It is a magic that is hardly ever used these days. Because it was used in combination with Chains of Delusion, it couldn't be avoided. In the end, the Dark Wolf player is holding back Blue Sword just like everyone expected. Pathetic!

“You black dog child, Blue Sword is losing because of you!”

The crowd erupted with swearing. However, in this situation it wasn't even possible to call 100. Under the Possession of Bing, Ark's body moved selfishly. He started to attack Shambala under Dior's control, just like a puppet. Thanks to the necromancer, Ark and the doped warrior, the fight had become 3 against 1. Shambala's health decreased as he was attacks by swords and magic from all directions.

“This stupid child!”

“I'm sorry.”

“You're saying sorry while trying to cut me?

Shambala avoided Ark's attack and started attacking again. He had felt like hiding inside a deep rat hole. However the situation wasn't that bad. While his body was being moved around selfishly, Ark was able to not pay any attention and organize the surrounding circumstances.

“Shambala, hold on a little. I’ll somehow make up for Bing’s possession.”

“Bah, OK. This has to be seen to be believed, Width!

Shambala kicked the ground forcefully. At the moment, the muddy water of swamp flew up and obstructed the view. Shambala used Blink successively to gain some distance. While Ark was possessed by Bing, he gave up on attacking from the beginning and only concentrated on reducing the damage. However, even Shambala couldn’t avoid everything and his health was reduced to 40% by the time Bing’s possession finished.

“Have you finished being stupid?”

“I’m sorry. My spirit is steady now.

“I don’t want any of those thousand people to get the share of the prize.”

“That’s right.”

Ark glared at Dior while wiping his face of the mud that was covering it. His anger had been firmly pushed down during the 3 minutes and now it bubbled over.

## Brilliant Debut

“Now I’m going to enjoy myself!”

“Do you think we look like beginners child? Chain of delusion!”

At that moment, Ark’s eyes lit up. Then he used Riposte! He sent the Chain of Delusion back with a violent noise.

“Ma-the magic bounced off the sword?”

Dior freaked out and hurriedly stepped back. However, Ark’s movement was several times faster. Ark simultaneously threw his body forward and kicked Dior in the chest. Dior stumbled and requested help from his partner.

“Ju-Justin!”

“Ah, I can’t. This Blue Sword guy.....is incredibly strong!

In a 1 on 1 situation, Shambala was too much to deal with even when the warrior was doped with drugs. Then Dior bit his tooth and pulled something out from his bag.

“Hell, I can’t believe I have to use this in the first match.....”

Dior held up dozens of canine teeth. He sprinkled the fangs on the floor and twenty skeleton bodies rose armed with a sword and shield or a bow. The magic eye shouted with an intense voice.

-Oh, the Necromancer has used his special racial skill. If he gathers the canine teeth of the skeletons through hunting, then the technique would allow him to summon them. Surprisingly, he summoned twenty of them! If I have to give an additional explanation, the pairs tournament doesn’t allow the use of consumption items but any skill related items are the exception. While the Dark Wolf player showed some nice movement before, it probably isn’t easy to take care of that many in a swamp. Perhaps he might need the help of his colleague?

However, Shambala just continued attacking Justin without even turning his

head. The magic eye murmured with a sigh.

-Ah, Blue Sword player. Even though partners can have some differences. Don't you think such behaviour isn't good for a pairs tournament? Anyway, the Dark Wolf player is in a crisis!

Dior also seemed to have the same idea as a light of mockery hovered around his mouth.

"Heh, you've been abandoned."

"Really? Who is the one that is thrown away?"

"Let's end it instantly. Skeleton unit. Attack!"

The skeleton archers fired arrows.

"Summon Deimos!"

Deimos showed up in front of Ark and shielded him. The magic eye shouted with a surprised voice.

-This is unexpected. This time, Blue Sword seems to have teamed up with a warrior who can summon. Ah.....But what is it? Is it a rag? He seems shabby compared to the skeletons that Dior has summoned. And in the end, it is only one skeleton. Is this a joke? It somehow seems like a final desperate struggle

However, it soon became ironic as the match immediately changed. Deimos was a skeleton with a really shabby exterior. But Deimos crushed all the arrows like he was a shield so all 10 arrows were stopped. He then ran up to five skeletons and engaged in close combat.

In general summoning, the summoned monster would have 60% of the player's level. But when summoning a unit like this, they only had 30%. In other words, Dior was level 100 so his summoned skeletons were only level 30~40 at most. However, Deimos was different from the normal summons.

His stats rose on their own without paying any attention to the level of the summoner. After Deimos fused with Warwick, at present he was level 70! Moreover, Ark's technique was different from Dior's disposable summons and battle experience was accumulated. Double bang, Snap, Crunch! The arms of the skeletons broke under Ark's and Deimos' onslaught.

“Okay, Deimos. It isn't necessary to pay any attention to the skeletons anymore. Now.....”

Then Deimos' eye colour changed. He scanned the bodies of the skeletons and examined them with his eyes. The skeletons suddenly winced with an unknown anxiety. At that moment, Deimos suddenly rushed at the tooth. And he caught a bone from one of the skeletons who struggled before it was broken off. However, he didn't stop there and grabbed other parts of the body and broke them off. The skeleton soon changed into a pile of bones.

Clack clack clack!

Deimos turned his head with a dissatisfied look. Jump, the remaining skeletons were surprised and fled in different directions. From then on, Deimos started to chase them without listening to Ark's command. It had triggered Deimos' hobby of collecting bones.

‘That guy again.....!’

Ark sighed.

This was not the first time. There were many times when Deimos was engrossed in his hobby of collecting bones. Once he found a monster with a favourite bone, he would continue to chase that monster until he got the bone in his hand. Well, in any case his stats were likely to go up because of the bones and Ark had never encountered a crisis because of it. The fact that he wouldn't follow the strategy wasn't the only problem. Sometimes he would just rush head first at the enemy without listening to Ark.

‘The master should also be able to control his summons.....’

But he didn't know what he could summon as a replacement.

'Well, it doesn't matter if all the skeletons leave the battle state.'

Ark looked at Deimos who was still stupidly chasing after the skeletons.

Then Dior's voice was heard from the opposite side.

"I don't understand how you can even summon a pet that doesn't even listen to its master's words. Okay, now is a chance. While a skeleton lures his summon, concentrate all your attacks on him!"

The skeleton archers simultaneously fired arrows at Ark.

-Oh, the skeleton archers are concentrating their attacks on Dark Wolf player. Even though he summoned a pet, it is pitiable that it is doing its own thing. Dark Wolf player is going to become a porcupine.....eh?

The announcer made a funny noise and held its breath. Depending on the level the speed, accuracy and power of an arrow would change. The arrows from the level 30~40 skeletons were nothing to Ark who had practice dealing with the thieves' arrows at later levels.

Ark lowered his body and grabbed his sword. He was gambling on his counter attack chain skill, Riposte! Arrows that flew within five feet of him was quickly bounced off. Ark reflected the arrows back and they flew back towards Dior.

"S-stop! Stop him!"

Dior burst out in surprise. The fifteen skeletons left took out a dagger and surrounded Ark.

'If I use Dark Dance then I can quickly escape and land a critical hit on Dior.....'

Ignoring the number of summons and making a concentrated attack on the necromancer. That was the basic tactic when dealing with a necromancer.

Yes, some necromancers who summoned had no techniques to fight without their pets. He would rather take the risk and get rid of the necromancer with

weak defense. However, Ark shook his head.

‘I was mistaken. This place is different from the other places that I have fought at so far. Here I am just a beginner. Therefore, like a beginner I should learn how to fight here. If I want a positive outcome for this tournament, I must adapt to the situation.’

His first task was to adapt to the atmosphere of the Evil Silrion. The skeletons were the best opponents to practice against. Ark quickly looked around and examined the situation of the match. Deimos had finished examining four skeletons and was on his fifth one. Although his hobby of collecting bones was strange, he didn’t require any help.

It also wasn’t necessary to worry about Shambala. Although his health was only 40% due to the earlier damage, if he only compared the skill set than Justin was not an opponent for Shambala. Besides, as the match time became longer, the effects of Justin’s potions gradually wore off which increased the pace of Shambala’s attacks.

“As expected from the Blue Sword!”

Every time the flashy offensive of Shambala hit, the crowd would give an exclamation. Now the only thing left was Ark!

“Now, come!”

Ark’s eyes gleamed as the skeleton’s left hands rose. Then like a canine tooth, the dagger targeted his neck.

-Ah, Dark Wolf seems to be facing off against fifteen summoned skeletons alone without the help of his summon. Is he insane? That wasn’t it. Did he become overconfident because he hit some arrows? If Dark Wolf loses here, then the balance of the match would collapse and it would become difficult for Blue Sword again.

‘It is your mistake that you summoned skeletons.’ The magic eye’s condemnation was followed by the crowd’s boos. But Ark had already ducked to the ground to avoid the dagger. He did a 360 degree sweep with his leg, causing the skeletons to fall to the ground. The sparkle of his sword shone and three or four skeletons lost their heads immediately.

Ark knew the reason why Dior chose a skeleton unit. In PVP, a necromancer feared close combat the most. Most magicians hated close combat but it was even worse in a necromancer. They summoned troops in a unit because they had the worst defense among all the professions. Therefore the summoned troops as soon as the battle begins to be used as a shield. In particular, they preferred to summon a small number of skeletons.

When skeletons are summoned, they have abundant numbers and they won’t die even if their arms and legs are broken. Even if they only have 1% of health left, their health could be recovered using the other skeletons. Their recovery ability is the necromancer’s strongest shield. However, the weak point of the skeleton unit was their balance.

When a skeleton is smashed in the skull, they become paralyzed. While the strong points were its damage and re-assembly ability, it also had a fatal weakness.

Of course, it wasn’t simple to crush the skull was receiving dozens of attacks. But Ark was the opponent. He had practiced dodging dozens of tentacles and learnt how to deal with aggressive monsters. Moreover, it was the skeleton that he was sick of dealing with in the underground labyrinth. Destroying level 30~40 skeletons was as simple as using taekwondo against a child. Ark dropped a skeleton to the ground using a kick and concentrated his attacks on that skeleton.

“Pant, S-summon recovery!”

Dior frantically used recovery magic. But even when the skeleton’s health was restored, its skull would just be crushed again and it was unable to fight.

Snap! In just a few minutes, Ark broke the last skeleton's skull.

"This, unbelievable.....Chain of Delusion!"

Dior shouted with his hands stretched out. But in the end nothing came out of his palm. After summoning the skeletons and recovering their health, he had no more mana left. A magician without mana wasn't so tough.

"Kkurururu"

Ark literally laughed like an animal. A vortex spun around as he kicked out his feet. Dior instantly lost 50% of his health.

"Ju-Justin!"

"Sheesh, I was trying to save this.....Berserker mode!"

When his partner was at risk, Justin immediately triggered his deadly skill. It was his racial special skill, Berserker mode! It recovered 30% of his health and was a morale skill which increased his offense and defense by 50% for 5 minutes. After the 5 minutes ended, he would be unable to move so it wasn't a skill that was often used. However in a tournament, 5 minutes was often enough time to obtain a decisive outcome. That is because the odds were high for warriors in the Evil Silrion.

"Pikyo!"

Justin swung his sword against Shambala's and pushed him back. At this time, Shambala's health was almost at the bottom. The overwhelming damage he received in the beginning was too large. Because he couldn't face the 50% increased attack power of Justin, he gave way.

-Atch, Blue Sword player, Justin has used the decisive moment to take out the better player. Then Dark Wolf player who is driving back Dior with receive the thrust of Justin's attack in the side. After that slump in the first few minutes, Dark Wolf player is again in a crisis. It is indeed a crisis!

Crisis was the magic eye's words. While Shambala was there, Ark never had to think about Justin. In fact, Ark also didn't have that much health left. Even

though his level was superior, fighting against fifteen skeletons wasn't easy. In addition, Dior's attitude had changed to attack. If he receives an attack from the side, the centre would collapse and he would fall into a rigid state for a while.

'If I receive the concentrated attacks of Dior and Justin continuously then it would be dangerous!'

Ark's head thought at a frantic pace. Fortunately, the spiritual power that he used to summon Deimos was at 100% again. He could summon Dedric and have him use Dark Dash to avoid Justin's attacks. But Ark soon shook his head. He was reluctant to summon Dedric.

'Then.....'

"Release summon, summon Deimos!"

At that moment, Deimos who was piling up bones disappeared. And returned next to Ark. Deimos looked around with a confused face and discovered Justin who was rushing to attack. His eyes grew wider as he became stuck in the swamp.

'Bah, Master doesn't let me enjoy my hobby.'

"What, what the?"

Justin was confused as he unexpectedly crashed into Deimos. Justin had raised his sword too late and Ark was already gone. Ark was floating in the air. Ark's body jumped vertically into the air before it stopped and started spinning suddenly. It was an aerial spin kick which caused bursts of air. Justin was surprised and lifted his shield. But no matter how long he waiting, there was no shock wave on his shield.

"Eh? What, what the?"

Justin followed Ark's movements with a foolish expression. Although he thought it was flying to the side, Ark's leg suddenly soared up.

“A fake?”

Yes, the spin kick in the air was a trick. The real attack was when he fell down and did a windmill! Snap! His foot kicked out and hit Justin’s forehead. It was a windmill kick with all his weight put behind it. And Ark used his Sword-Hand combat to increase the probability of the attack hitting since it was a technique with a high level of difficulty. Justin was stunned by the attack and fell to his knees. Double critical chance!

“Dark blade!”

Ark used Dark Blade without any delay. Dark Blade which ignored the defense was a natural enemy of warriors which relied on high defense. As soon as damage from the double critical chance was added, Justin collapsed head first into the swamp and died from the critical hit. The inside of the stadium was as quiet as a dead mouse for a moment.

It was like watching a martial arts competition, where the opponent was overwhelmed with hard kicks. After a while, the magic eye frantically made a noise.

-Wh-what was that? That was a form of martial arts from a foreigner! Incredible! I thought Dark Wolf player was a summoner but he was instead a martial artist. Then why did he summon the trivial skeleton? Ah, such a thing doesn’t matter. Anyway, it has become clear that Dark Wolf is not Blue Sword’s sidekick!

“Un-unbelievable!”

At that time, Dior rushed to Ark with the remaining skeleton. At that moment Ark turned his body and there was an intense ringing sound.

“Blink, Light wave!”

Instantaneously, Shambala flew across the swamp towards Dior. When the mud which flew up into the sky fell down again, Shambala had already stabbed his dagger into Dior. When Dior collapsed, the skeletons turned into a powder. Shambala wiped off the mud with a shrug.

“I only did that so you could play an active part.”

“Wily guy”

A wry smile spread over Ark’s mouth. It was then that Ark understood the whole situation.

It was Shambala’s plan from the beginning. Even when Justin was doped with the drugs, he could’ve handled him faster. However, Shambala took his time. Then he also didn’t stop Justin’s final assault on purpose. Whether it was to make Ark adapt to the match or a test of his skills, Ark didn’t know.....But from the beginning, the fight had progressed as Shambala intended. Indeed, he couldn’t underestimate his 37 winning streak in the arena. Extravagant cheers continuously overflowed from the spectator seats. Unlike the first time, half the cheers were for Ark.

-Thus ends the 7th match in the tournament! The 14th team is the winner! It is Blue Sword with the reputation of 28 straight wins and his partner! In his debut match, Dark Wolf appeared like a comet and showed some surprising skills! Please clap your hands for the glorious winners!

“Wah ah ah!”

“Dark Wolf, why did you wander in the beginning when you’re so good?”

“Blue Sword, Dark Wolf! The best. I lost money but you made some fans today!”

“Dark Wolf oppa, his fang is awesome!”

He also received a thunderous ovation. Clack clack clack! Clack clack clack! Deimos had finally managed to heave himself up from the ground. Had he remembered a memory from his former life? He unexpectedly liked the showmanship. Ark cancelled the summoning and Deimos returned to the Netherworld.

‘After evolving, his character has become a little strange.....’

When they returned to the waiting room, the management NPC approached.

“Congratulations to both of you. Since the number of participants had increased, your next match is expected to take place the day after tomorrow. You can relax for now.”

Suddenly a message window appeared in front of Ark.

You have won the first fight in the Evil Silrion.

Current record: 1 win <Victory  
bonus: Fame +10>

“Kuo oooo!”

The Deadman yelled and brandished a window. The Deadman was similar to undead monsters such as zombies, but unlike zombies they managed to keep their armour and weapons intact so they were equipped with much higher stats. Well, they were still no match for Ark.

The level of Deadman was 100. At that level, it already wasn't a match. In addition, his experience from the Evil Silrion was already in effect. After the degree and complexity of a user's movements, the movement of Deadman felt monotonous and slow. Ark avoided the window with flew at him and swung his sword. The Deadman who received the concentrated attack disappeared into a powder. And after the last one died, a heavy object bounced onto the ground.

Warrior's Transcripts

Item type: Leather Shoulder Blades

Defense power: 15

Durability: 13/50

Weight: 20

User restriction: Level 80 or more

The Forest of Souls is an area with a big war took place during the Dark Century. Numerous warriors who fought against the darkness were buried here with their armour. Hundreds of years have passed since then and most of the armour is already gone, but sometimes armour with magical powers could be found. These armours add a special power to the monsters that inhabit the Forest of Souls.

<Option: Strength +3>

Ark's eyes lit up at the sight of the information window. Three days had already passed since his flash debut match in the Evil Silrion arena. The fact that it was a different world was all the same to Ark. The participants that Hyun-woo met were chaotic players of different levels. Unlike the chaotic players who targeted low level players to decrease their burden, these ones focused on raising their skill level and equipment. In addition, the specialized fields and hands on experience in the Evil Silrion were better than being chaotic. Those users were thoroughly prepared and not really creative. Of course, he learnt a lot from the quality of the battles. But the problem was that he couldn't earn a substantial income from it. Usually he would've already entered the final match after three days of game time. However, this time the number of participants was unprecedented so the schedule of the tournament was extended by several times. Even if the number of matches increased, at the most it only had one match per day. 1 day was barely 3 hours in reality. Even if it was possible to finish all the matches at that pace, it was still more than 8 hours in reality. And he didn't know how long it

would take for the other games, so if the time was accelerated suddenly then he might have to play a match that wasn't in the schedule. Therefore, they couldn't go away while the tournament was in progress. Therefore most of the participants had no choice but to wait around. However, that was no problem for Ark. 'Yes! Shoulder Blades, finally!

There was at least 8 hours every night when the Evil Silrion would close its doors. If the fight ended quickly and another match scheduled then there would be an announcement at least 1 hour before. Even if he went hunting, as long as it was within a distance of 1 hour from Selebrid then it didn't matter.

Of course, when the schedule suddenly changed and he was in the hunting ground then there was no way to receive a notification. However, that was only for ordinary users.

"From today, you will live here. And fly swiftly to alert me if anything happens."

"What? Are you asking me to sit here all day like a rock and listen to them talk?"

"If you ever doze off and delay trying to contact me.....you wouldn't be able to speak with all the dreadful things shoved in your mouth. I'll leave it to your imagination."

After Ark used intimidation, Dedric was left behind at the Evil Silrion. Dedric complained of course but followed his orders without any resistance. As soon as Ark showed him a medley he created, Dedric quickly nodded with a haggard face.

When the distance was within 1 hour, even if the schedule changed then Ark could hunt to his heart's content.

'Now, since I can't go too far from Selebrid then shouldn't I find the most efficient hunting ground? I need to find a hunting ground with decent experience and income but.....'

Shambala easily solved the problem. Shambala had been in Selebrid for a while and already discovered all the information about the surrounding hunting grounds. Shambala was glad that Ark was taking advantage of the free time to do some hunting. But he was worried about any changes to the tournament schedule. However, with the promise that Dedric would be stationed at the bulletin board, he told Ark all the information about the nearby hunting grounds.

“At any rate, you’re also a guy who can’t stand still. When I was in trouble in a difficult place and got lost, I found a suitable hunting ground. If you find any items that could be helpful in the tournament then that would be convenient.”

The place Shambala recommended was the Forest of Souls. There were two reasons why Shambala recommended it. One reason was that it was only 30 minutes away from Selebrid. With a 1 hour round trip, he didn’t have to worry about being late to the game.

And the second reason was.....

“You still haven’t equipped any bracelets or shoulder blades?”

“Bracelet? Shoulder blades?”

“Selebrid is a kind of boundary spot. The bracelets and shoulder blades that aren’t dropped in Giran start to show up. Even if it was dropped in Giran, the level has to be at least 80 so it is insignificant.....anyway, since bracelets and shoulder blades have a defense stat, they should be useful in the tournament.”

“I can find it in the nearby hunting grounds?”

“You usually have to go a few hours away to the burial mound area, but I know that the Forest of Souls happens to drop some. Quite a lot of people have obtained bracelets and shoulder blades from the Deadman mob. But it is no joke as the drop rate is quite low.”

Shambala said that he should try though. He probably thought that Ark would try for a few hours and then give up. After all, it normally took a few hours killing the same monster for an item with low drop rate to fall. Even if the information about the monster was known, it wasn't easy to find a good item. But Shambala didn't know Ark properly.

‘New equipment item!’

Except for when there was a match, Ark lived in the Forest of Souls. And when he saw a Deadman, he desperately rushed up to it even though he was fighting other monsters.

However, the most that the Deadman dropped was a few japtém worth several silvers. The drop rate was so low that most would have considered stopping. Ark started to have doubts by the time that he hunted hundreds of them.

‘Are the bracelets or shoulder blades really going to drop?’

Even though the information was authentic, he would rather shift to a higher level hunting ground to obtain more experience and better japtém. But Ark soon shook his head.

‘No, it is a war of patience trying to find a useable item from a normal monster. Since others held on, I cannot give up until I get the same results as them. I have to hang in longer than others in order to get good items! Until luck follows then I have to hold on!’

Since then, Ark attacked the Deadman even more relentlessly. While he went back and forth between Selebrid, two days had passed and finally a desired item had dropped.

Amulet of Vitality (Magic)

Item type: Bracelet

Durability: 15/20

Weight: 10

User restriction: Level 80 or more

An old bracelet that was buried in the Forest of Souls.

After a long time, it is ragged and doesn't shine anymore but its magical powers still remain.

<Option: Health +50>

<Special Option: Vitality (Health recovers by 5 every 20 seconds)>

It was the item obtained after hunting nearly a thousand of the Deadman for 2 days. Well, when looking at the stats it wasn't that great. Health +50. Ark's current health was 2000. If a high level monster hit him, it would do more than 50 damage. In such a situation, he didn't know if 50 extra health was significant. But of course it was better to have it then to have nothing. In addition, the special options meant that a small but steady amount of his health would be continuously restored! 'A bracelet!'

'Two bracelets can be equipped at the same time. If I find another Amulet of Vitality that would mean +100 health and 10 health points being restored every 20 seconds! It is the jackpot!'

He wasn't about to give up half way so Ark clung even more frantically to the hunt. Sometimes online gaming was strange. Items had a probability rate of dropping. Sometimes, the item would not drop even if you died and came back and sometimes they would drop straight away. He spent one more day hunting in the Forest of Souls before he found the shoulder blades.

‘Defense 15 and Strength 3.....the defense is on the low side, but the option is useable for beginners. It is trivial compared to the items being sold in Selebrid, but instead of spending 300 gold for slightly higher stats, this is the far better option. And better shoulder blades might drop in the future.’

Ark gave a warm smile and began to wear the shoulder blades. Halfway to his shoulder, he saw that it was rotting with a bad odour. If he was a user that paid attention to what he looked like, his face would have contorted but since he only cared about the added defense, Ark was happy and smiled.

‘I don’t care about my appearance. The important thing is the stats!’

Ark’s only value was usefulness. Ark attached the shoulder blades and checked out the stat window.

<b>Character Name</b>	Ark	<b>Race</b>	Human
<b>Alignment</b>		Good +250	
<b>Fame</b>	1965	<b>Level</b>	125
<b>Profession</b>		Dark Walker	
<b>Title</b>	Cat Knight, Caretaker of All, Jackson’s Hero		
<b>Health</b>	2115 (+100)	<b>Mana</b>	1930
<b>Spiritual Power</b>	100	<b>Strength</b>	274 (+18)
<b>Agility</b>	324(+25)	<b>Stamina</b>	414 (+10)
<b>Wisdom</b>	43(+10)	<b>Intelligence</b>	367
<b>Luck</b>	44	<b>Flexibility</b>	39
<b>Art of Communication</b>	33	<b>Affection</b>	77 (+10)

\* Equipment item effects

Guardian Armour of the Merpeople: Water Attribute Resistance +100%,  
Penalty based on water is nullified.

Cat Paws (Gloves): Attack Speed +10%, Agility +15, Critical Hit +10%

Raccoons Pith (Helmet): Agility + 10, Wisdom + 10\*

<King> Set effect: Strength + 10, Agility + 10, Stamina +10, Defense +20

Warrior's Transcripts (Shoulder Blades): Strength + 3

Improved Norad Boots (Shoes): Movement Speed + 15%, Evasion + 10%

Veil of Fire (Mantle): Flame resistance + 50%

Adelaine's Necklace (Necklace): Defense + 40, Affection +10, 'Blessing of the Sea' available

Resurrecting Spirit (Ring): Strength + 5, Mana recovery + 5%

\* All abilities will increase by 40% in the dark

\* You have the ability to hide in the darkness (20 minutes duration.  
Cancelled when you get into combat)\* Resistance Fear, Darkness, Blind,  
and Seduction spells is increased by 50%.

\* You can bring out the true abilities from all types of tools.

Level 125. He had increased his level by 2 after hunting in the Forest of Souls for 3 days. It was quite good since he had to play in the matches as well as sometimes hunting. The experience for the Deadman was low but he hunted quite a lot of them. In addition, the monsters weren't strong so he didn't have to take a rest every time a battle ended. Thanks to not resting and

just hunting, he obtained results beyond what he expected.

‘Okay, while this experience is great for a short term plan.’

However unlike Ark, Deimos sighed with a sulky face. Clack clack, clack clack.....

Ark had been stubborn when hunting the Deadman. When the Deadman died, it turned to powder so Deimos couldn’t enjoy his hobby of collecting bones. Therefore, Deimos didn’t enjoy the situation. But while raising the ability of his summons was important, it was more important that Ark’s abilities rose.

“Deimos, I don’t have time for you to be sighing. Because Dedric isn’t here you have to play his role as well. Hurry up! Until we can find another bracelet, there are no breaks.”

Ark rushed the depressed Dedric and began hunting the Deadman again. When 30 minutes had passed, he heard alarm sounds in his ears.

‘Pant, it is already this time.....!’

Ark swung his sword one more time before disappearing from the forest.

“Why isn’t it straight?”

Lee Myung-ryong shouted as he stomped on the floor. Of course, Hyun-woo also wanted to do it properly. However, what could he do if his body didn’t move fast enough to not get hit? While he wanted to fly like a butterfly, his arms and legs wouldn’t move the way he desired. Even though he could clearly see the opponent’s attack, he couldn’t even move an arm to block it. Pepepek, after a slow impact shocked him, he stopped for a while and shook his head. When Hyun-woo stopped, Lee Myung-ryong immediately raised his voice angrily.

“You idiot, how many times do I have to say it? When you are hit then don’t step back but absorb the impact. Use your lower back! Remember to use your lower back in the future!”

Although it was easy to say.....how many people would remember it when being hit with a fist in the face? However, Hyun-woo clenched his teeth and summoned more power to his legs. It was because he knew from experience would kind of trouble there would be if he didn’t follow Lee Myung-ryong’s words.

‘Damn, well since I’m going to die anyway, it doesn’t matter what state I’m in when I die!’

“This is just like being a zombie.”

Hyun-Woo rushed at the opponent like a bulldozer when the whistle blew. But at the same moment, Hyun-woo felt an intense blow to his side. Although he experienced it a lot, it was an attack that he couldn’t really adapt to. The blow to his body caused his gut to twist in pain.

How is it? Is there a lot of tingling? This is a medicine for zombies.”

Meanwhile, 1 more blow struck him on the other side. Immediately his legs started to tremble. However, Hyun-Woo didn’t even have the right to lie down comfortably on the floor.

“30 seconds left, will you manage to hold up for 30 seconds? Do you want to lie down and get disliked?”

Hyun-woo heard Lee Myung-ryong say in a sparkling voice. So he drew in a deep breath and corrected his posture. The expression of the opponent who thought it had ended turned pale. After a brief moment, he contorted his lips and started the onslaught.

Straight, hook and upper cut! It was like shower of punches that wouldn’t stop! However, Hyun-woo made his defense as hard as a turtle and withstood the attacks. But eventually, his arms lowered and he gradually lost power in

his legs. And when both of his arms finally lowered, the fist of the opponent rushed towards Hyun-woo's face. The person that allowed him to escape the crisis was Lee Myung-ryong.

"Stop! The 3rd round has ended."

When Lee Myung-ryong's voice rang out, the fist immediately stopped. Then Hyun-woo let out a laugh and said.

"A leader is a leader, but you're terrible too. That was a really tough 3rd round to endure."

Hyun-woo sighed and flopped down to the ground. He laid down on the floor and stared at the ceiling of the gym. The after effect of being hit was that the ceiling seemed to shake left and right.

'Whew, I dug my own grave.....I really will either become a superman or die.....'

He thought about the remaining practice schedule that was still ahead of him. After he had arrived at Selebrid, Hyun-woo had asked Lee Myung-ryong to train him specifically for the matches in the Evil Silrion. In retrospect, he didn't know why he did such a reckless thing. Special training.....it was a grave that he personally dug for himself.

The system that Lee Myung-ryong used to train Hyun-woo made Ark's training of his summons seem a hundred times more humane.

"I'm making a Superman."

He had thought it was a joke. Of course not. Who would think those words were serious? However, some humans in the world don't know common sense. This Lee Myung-ryong.....

Recently, just listening to the name was enough to make him sweat. For the last three days, the training that Lee Myung-ryong was putting him was not something that most humans could digest. Gwon Hwa-rang said that Lee

Myung-ryong was a delinquent before he became a policeman, but he introduced them anyway. It seems that Lee Myung-ryong thought of himself as a mad scientist. And it was clear that he was determined to reshape Hyun-woo into an artificial man as much as possible. Otherwise, he wouldn't be able to devise such a non-humane training system.

The first day that Hyun-woo visited the gym Lee Myung-ryong just smiled and made him do exercises from the national gymnastics team.

“So let's start lightly shall we? Do one handed pushups on both sides 50 times.”

“Yes? But I've never managed to do more than twenty pushups using one hand?”

Frankly, how many ordinary men in Korea would be able to do one handed pushups twenty times? He thought it was a great standard. But no sooner had he finished talking then his stomach was pushed down with a kick.

“Didn't I say this before? From the moment you entered here. The one thing that is prohibited.”

“Ha, but.....”

“Do you think my words are funny?”

Lee Myung-ryong smiled and spoke. He was one of the few humans who could beat a man with his smile.

“I knew a junior who was a short distance sprinter. That guy was able to run 100 metres in 11 seconds. But that wasn't enough to hand out a business card at a convention. Even when he almost died from the effort, he couldn't shorten it to 10 seconds and eventually gave up and became a policeman. So during the first dispatch, he was a newbie and forgot the strategies and found himself surrounded by delinquents while alone. Well, at first it was all right. The guys were trying to kill him with sashimi knives so of course the guy frantically ran away. Now, can you guess what happened?”

“As a track and field athlete, didn’t he get away unharmed?”

“That’s right, but the important thing is what happened next.”

“And then?”

“Since that day, he has been able to run it in 10 seconds.”

“Yes? How.....?”

Lee Myung-ryong replied in a tone that implied it wasn’t a big deal.

“Simple. From the beginning, that guy could run it in 10 seconds. He was built with those kinds of muscles. However, it was the case he couldn’t run it because he thought he couldn’t do it. Every time he ran, he thought that even though it was his best time, he still couldn’t do it. But after that incident, the thought that he had trapped himself with disappeared.”

“It’s a touching story. But what does that have to do with me?”

Hyun-Woo asked, feeling uneasy. As expected, the answer made him worried.

“It seems to me that you’re also a guy who could do that? How about it? Are you not proud?”

“What on earth.....what’s you’re basis for that?”

“The eyes in this body!”

Ah, it was like that? There is no reason for him to object.

However, the terrible thing was that Lee Myung-ryong really took it to heart and continued to make successive points. This mad scientist really believed he was a genius with a keen eye. Therefore, he was caught in the illusion that he might be able to remodel him until he became an artificial man. The even worse thing was that it wasn’t entirely absurd. Once he tried it, Hyun-woo was able to increase the number of his one-handed pushups. His best record was twenty-five times, that was his limit so far. However, when he was

threatened by Lee Myung-ryong and felt desperate then it was possible for him to do fifty. The fear of violence temporarily suppressed the pain of his body. But that was only a warm up exercise.

“Now, should we begin?

Lee Myung-ryong called to the SWAT team member exercising to one side and said.

“This guy did amateur boxing during high school. He was within the top 10 in the nation so he should be suitable as your rival. The rule is 3 rounds of boxing!”

Hyun-woo’s face had a look of speculation. The pushups were to such an extent that he had cramps in his arm muscles. It wasn’t even taekwondo, but he was expected to spar in boxing using only his fist? Against a former boxer who was within the top 10 of the nation? He hoped it was a joke, but the word joke wasn’t even in Lee Myung-ryong’s vocabulary. Lee Myung-ryong fitted the gloves on him while cheering with warm words.

“If you give up then you will die.”

Of course, it couldn’t be a direct fight. Hyun-woo went through 3 rounds that were 3 minutes each. By the end of the 9 minutes, he had become flattened like a rice cake.

“Pathetic, being hit by such a trivial guy.....”

Lee Myung-ryong clicked his tongue like he had been presented with a menu. Then it was the abs and back exercises. 200 sit ups, 200 chin ups and 200 flank movements. He made him do upper and lower abs exercises 200 times.....the various abs exercises added up to one thousand times. Then another member of the SWAT team was summoned. They were the frontline members that defended the Republic of Korea. Since the job required stamina and skills, the various members could rival the athletes. The member who was summoned this time also had nice muscles. The degree of muscles was

so much that Hyun-woo would be easily crushed by it.

“This guy used to have a career in amateur wrestling. He is slightly better than the earlier guy, since he won a bronze medal in a national competition. 3 rounds begin!”

It was really crazy. After making him go through a crazy abs workout, now he expected him to do wrestling? Against one of the nation’s top wrestlers? Wasn’t this just harassment? But he couldn’t say anything at the sight of Lee Myung-ryong’s cold eyes and started the spar. Of course, the result was that he became a rice cake. Lee Myung-ryong’s training was always like this. Hyun-woo had heard that he was a taekwondo state representative so had guessed that his training would be an intensive course in taekwondo techniques. But Lee Myung-Ryong only trained him in taekwondo for 15 minutes. The rest was all training the basic physical strength and sparring. The spars against the athletes were also unrelated to taekwondo. But Lee Myung-ryong had a firm belief for that part.

“Do you want to exercise to show a nice kick in front of your girlfriend? Or do you want to become stronger?”

“To become stronger.....I’d like to.”

“Then the taekwondo posture isn’t necessary. Because you won’t become strong with that type of practice. Strong training should be hands on experience. This situation is also going to get worse.”

Anyway, the final stage of his training was leg exercises. After stretching his legs, the final boss Lee Myung-ryong emerged.

He was able to judge the situation with the boxer and wrestler to some extent. At least they were people. However, Lee Myung-ryong wasn’t a person. Hyun-woo had to experience many times the hell that was his attacks, which battered him like a storm. There were times when he really thought that he was about to die. But Lee Myung-ryong just spoke with a smirk.

“The thing that people call the human body. It is surprisingly well made. It doesn’t die easily. And once it is broken, it becomes even stronger.”

The ideas of the mad scientist were always terrifying. Since then, he seemed to have adapted a little bit to the pain. And at that time, Hyun-woo realized that Lee Myung-ryong’s training schedule wasn’t something he had just guessed at and threw together.

‘It is similar to taekwondo. Taekwondo uses kicks but the important thing isn’t the strength in the legs. The movement of the upper body is more important. Boxing uses fist but that wasn’t all it uses. The movement of the waist and legs is more important when punching.’

Although he wouldn’t be able to spar against a boxer if he couldn’t move his arms, Hyun-woo learned how to move his waist and the steps. It was the same for wrestling. Although it only seemed to rely on the waist, the proper techniques wouldn’t be able to be used just relying only on waist power. If the power was in the lower back, he would be able to use techniques with natural posture. But even though he understood that with his head, his wrestling and boxing capabilities didn’t increase. He had no choice but to become a rice cake as he learnt with his body.

“That’s the guy? The pitiful guy that was taken by you?”

While Hyun-woo was sparring with the former wrestler again, one of the swat team members asked Lee Myung-ryong. Lee Myung-ryong smiled and nodded his head.

“Yes, he is working hard to be remodelled.”

“Although it has been several days, he is holding up well. It seems he is able to digest quite a lot of physical strength exercises.....Are you trying to train him to make it stick in his mind? You are.....”

“Stop saying unnecessary things.....”

Lee Myung-ryong frowned at the words, causing the member to flinch. To

the SWAT team members, Lee Myung-ryong was a frightening person.

“How is it? Do you see any talent?”

“Do you think I’m a psychic? That one look would let me know whether he has talent?”

“What the? Then do you have to practice with someone to tell their talent?”

“I don’t know how to see talent like you.” I don’t believe that, but there is one thing that I know.”

Lee Myung-ryong looked at Ark who was getting flattened on the mat and said in a low voice.

“It depends on whether that guy is able to endure or not.

‘The road to become a Superman is steep and far.’

Hyun-woo led his unsteady body out of the gymnasium. He exercised at the gym for 2 hours every day. The time that he trained with the team was similar to when he exercised alone. No, if it was increased any more than he would’ve surely died. Anyway, even if Hyun-woo made up his mind to concentrate on movements for longer, his stamina was limited.

When he exited the gym, he saw on the clock that it was 5 p.m. The next fight was at 9 p.m. so 4 hours still remained. If he connected immediately then he would be able to concentrate on hunting in the Forest of Souls for 3 hours. Hyun-woo soon changed his mind.

No, since teacher Lee Myung-ryong changed the training time there has been no opportunity to visit my mother. During a quest it is hectic so I would have no time to visit, so I should visit her when I train in the afternoon. No matter how important the game is I can’t neglect my mother.’

Hyun-woo immediately visited the hospital carrying a basket of fruit. After his mother finished her rehabilitation, her wheelchair came into the garden.

“These days the time seems to pass quickly.”

His mother said with a bright look. Although she should be tired since her rehabilitation just finished, she showed no signs of it. Hyun-Woo wanted to let her enjoy the time so she would forget the fatigue. After seeing his mother, he was sorry that he hadn’t visited in a while.

“I’m sorry I haven’t been frequently visiting.”

“Don’t say such a silly thing.”

His mother shook her head.

“Do you think I’m a child? Even if you don’t say anything, I know you’ve been having a hard time. It is not necessary to come visit a sick person. I just.....want you to do what you want for a little while. Do you understand?”

“Then I’ll do that.”

“You’re not skipping meals?”

“Yes, I eat until I’m full.”

“But somehow I think you’ve become a little bit haggard. You also didn’t have those wounds before, perhaps.....?”

His mother said as she looked at Hyun-woo’s face. Even though he wore protective gear when sparring, there were times when his movements were rough and he received bruises. Although his face didn’t hurt, it probably looked like it did.

“I’m okay, please don’t think unnecessary things. It’s because these days I’ve started training again.”

Hyun-woo scratched his head with an embarrassed expression. Prepare rice

to eat and be careful. At one time he would've only heard it as a boring lecture.

When he had gotten tired of his mother's lecture, he became rebellious and acted out. However, that memory was painful now. When he had been unable to listen to the nagging anymore, he realized that the nagging was a precious part of his normal life. And hearing her say those words now warmed his heart.

“You lost weight. Are you eating your rice?”

Those were his mother's first words upon waking up in the ICU. It seemed that all she could see was the form of a child who became thin and wasn't able to lift a finger to help himself. That was his mother. It was his mother that Hyun-woo would love for his entire life.

“Yes, I listened to Detective Gwon's words. He said you were attending the police agency's gym. Although.....it is good for your health to exercise, you must be careful not to get injured. Well, Detective Gwon told me that his junior is looking after you so I don't have to worry.....”

“Hmm, you're speaking quite freely about Detective Gwon. Did you want to see him more than me? Should I call? He would come like a knife if I called.”

“This guy, what are you saying? Because I don't think he would go that far just for me.....”

“Ohuhuhu, are you turning red? Is my mother going to take the name Gwon?”

“You're becoming cheekier.”

“I should let ajusshi know.”

Hyun-woo smirked as he looked for a suitable bench to sit down on. As soon as he sat down, his mother took out some apples.

“Do you want an apple? I’ll cut it for you.”

“No. I’ll do it.”

His mother shook her head and starting cutting the apples with her free hands. Although Hyun-woo was worried, he just watched and was surprised at her skilful hand movements.

It was because he understood his mother’s sentiment. Whenever he saw that look, Hyun-woo was reminded of several years ago. His mother was often on the boundaries of life and death in the ICU.....the doctors at that time gave up on his mother. There’s an 80% chance she will either die or become a vegetable, they said in a cruel voice. Hyun-woo didn’t have the courage to watch his mother die so he threw himself into the nightlife. However, his mother’s status dramatically improved. It was from the time Gwon Hwa-rang dragged him to his mother and he spent the entire night beside her praying. The doctors called it a miracle. Hyun-Woo thought so too. But he now knew. It wasn’t a miracle or a coincidence.

‘Why is my home this poor?’

During his school days, Hyun-woo used to think that his house was quite poor. His other friends changed their cell phones whenever a new model came out, or would buy lots of clothes. There was also another friend who went to study abroad during junior high. On the other hand, Hyun-woo would buy new clothes every few months. He would buy clothes that cost 200,000 won at most.....why was he so poor? That was what he thought. But after the accident, Hyun-woo realized how young he was. At that time, Hyun-woo had to travel around to the houses of the victims’ families to give compensation as well as pay for his mother’s hospital bills. Even when Hyun-woo asked for help from his relatives, he only received cold, contemptuous looks in return. After they abandoned him, he sold some household furniture to try and make some money and discovered a bankbook in a cabinet. There were 5 bankbooks that combined added up to 100 million

won. However, they weren't under his father or mother's name. It was the insurance and savings under Hyun-woo's name.

His father received a monthly salary of 4 million won, and he put half of it in a savings account under Hyun-woo's name for 10 years. For 10 years, his father and mother would wear old clothes while buying meat and new clothes for Hyun-woo.

‘Do you know how guilty I feel?’

That day, Hyun-woo hugged the bankbooks to him and cried all night long. His parents were strong. This also caused the child to become strong. The reason his mother got up every day was because of that. At 17 years old, Hyun-woo realized that simple fact at last. The same was true for now as well. He didn't move his hand even when her fingers started shaking on the knife. It was something that he would've once considered useless stubbornness, but now Hyun-woo knew. Even though it might seem insignificant, it was an important job that his mother wanted to do. And she finally recovered enough to directly cut the apples. The reason that his mother might be able to endure such a tough rehabilitation was because she wanted to do such trivial things. When he thought about that, his chest started throbbing. Hyun-woo erased the thought and quickly changed the subject.

“But is Gwon ajusshi stopping in frequently?”

“Is this guy hanging around just to tease his mum?”

“No. I haven't seen him in a few days that's why I'm asking.”

There had been no contact between Gwon Hwa-rang and the rehabilitation members since they started searching for the thieves.

“Yes, he comes every other day. But your movements have changed a lot. Also your expression has brightened considerably.....I'll wait and see how much you get injured before judging. What did you do to get that guy to favour you?”

“I have to be attentive even if I’m not your father.”

“I can’t hear anything.”

“Mother, that’s not the sound of a joke. I’m also not a child. It isn’t necessary to worry about me. Mother also knows what kind of person Detective Gwon is.

“You’re giving me that speech even though I’m considerably older.”

“My mother is still beautiful. That’s why Detective Gwon fell for the whole package.”

“Let’s stop talking about him.”

Hyun-woo spoke so seriously that his mother blushed and didn’t know what to do. She seemed like a young girl again and looked quite cute. Then, his mother suddenly asked him with a curious look.

“Why are you laughing about this?”

“Yes? What?”

“Your girlfriend. Aren’t you going to formally introduce her to your mother or are you just keeping her hidden?”

“A girlfriend? Eh, I don’t have one.”

“I’ve met her already so why are you lying?”

“Yes? Met?”

Hyun-woo asked with a stunned expression.

“I can’t believe she hasn’t told you yet. Your girlfriend visited the hospital room yesterday evening with some porridge. She looked very nice. Her name if Jung Hye-sun yes?”

“H, Hye-sung?”

Hyun-woo’s eyes widened. Jung Hye-sun approximately knew Hyun-woo’s

circumstances. But he hadn't said that his mother was hospitalized or told her the name of the hospital. However, it wasn't difficult to know that it was Gwon Hwa-rang and the rehabilitation group who told her.

"Mother, since you haven't been very forthcoming with mother.....mother was relieved."

"Yes? You're relieved?"

"You never wanted to discuss girls or any problems you had with them."

"It's not that. Hye-sung is just like a younger sister to me."

His mother sent him a coy look and laughed.

"Originally I considered your dad as an oppa as well. Then we became your mother and father."

"It really isn't like that."

"Ho ho ho, I understand. You don't have to be embarrassed. Mother understands everything."

"It's the truth. Mother doesn't understand....."

"Then I'll act like I don't know. Let's finish it here. There is an empty container in the hospital room so bring it with you when you leave. Understand? If Hyun-woo is good then mother will be okay. Fighting!"

His mother raised her clenched fist. She had made up her mind and was determined to misunderstand.

7 p.m. It was the time that Jung Hye-sun would start her part time job. Hyun-woo had made an appointment with her before walking to meet her. He had been at the meeting place for 30 minutes and was pacing up and down with a

distant look.

“Wow, I’m impressed with Oppa. I wasn’t expecting you to call and ask to meet up.”

“My mother told me to return this.....”

Hyun-woo said as he extended his bag. It was the first time they had seen each other in reality after Gwon Hwa-rang tricked him into going on a date. Even though he called and asked to meet outside, he didn’t know what to say.....

“Eh? Did Oppa just come from the hospital?”

“How did you know about the hospital?”

Hyun-woo asked in a deliberately brusque voice. Then Jung Hye-sun shrank slightly and replied in a small voice.

“I heard from Gwon Hwa-rang ajusshi.”

Damn, it was just like he thought. That fox wearing the mask of a bear!

“Actually.....I said that I would go together with oppa but Gwon Hwa-rang said it wouldn’t be good for your mother’s heart if I didn’t go with the oppas who helped me prepare the porridge. Sorry. Are you angry?”

He didn’t want to hear her apologize. No, quite the opposite.

Of course, it was a little bit taxing but the first thing he thought of when he heard his mother say Jung Hye-sun’s name was thank you. After the accident, his relatives never visited so his mother was always alone. The only people that came to visit her were Gwon Hwa-rang and Hyun-woo. But now someone else has come. It was a person related to Hyun-woo.....Hyun-woo was secretly worried about his mother and welcomed other guests. Perhaps that was why he was in an exceptionally good mood today. Hyun-woo scratched his head before shaking it.

“No, I’m not upset. Although I am a little embarrassed.”

“Yes? What?”

“That.....My mother fell ill. It isn’t something to be proud about.”

Hyun-woo had never thought about his mother while he was embarrassed. But many people had heard Hyun-woo’s circumstances and sympathized. He didn’t want that. Perhaps that was another reason he hadn’t told Jung Hye-sun about his situation. But Jung Hye-sun hurriedly said.

“I don’t care about such things. Actually, I thought Oppa was really wonderful after I heard about your mother. Really. My impression of Oppa just improves even more.....”

Jung Hye-sun was surprised at her words and closed her mouth. Her voice rang loudly through the area. People passing by looked back startled while some couples giggled and whispered together. But it was Jung Hye-sung’s reaction that was more interesting. He would’ve thought blushing was the normal reaction, but Jung Hye-sun just held her head up high and said.

“What are you looking at? Is my Oppa so wonderful?”

“Omo, what is with her?”

Although some women gave her amazed glances, Jung Hye-sung didn’t even react. Hyun-woo was different and blushed as the eyes in the vicinity looked at him.

“Come on. Oppa.”

Jung Hye-sun took Hyun-woo’s arm and walked off.

“Ah, that was embarrassing.”

‘Was her original character like this?’

Hyun-woo was stunned for a short time. The Jung Hye-sun he knew was a timid girl who didn’t speak a lot, loved instruments and shed tears as the assistant section chief. Thanks to that, Hyun-woo had only thought of Jung Hye-sun as a little sister. But now he didn’t know if his impression was right.

The Jung Hye-sun Hyun woo met outside was more active, tough.....and pretty.

‘This guy, what am I thinking?’

Her side profile of a raised lip and eyes were surprisingly pretty. However, there was no man who didn’t know that such a secret must be hidden.

Technically, this was the first time that Hyun-woo had asked her out.

Naturally, Jung Hye-sun paid attention to her outfit and make-up and was fairly nervous. There was a legend that said once women finished being made up, there was a 150% boost and women would become more daring than usual.

“Can I visit the hospital again?”

Jung Hye-sun suddenly threw a straight pitch! No matter how much Hyun-woo thought, it wasn’t a question that he could easily answer. It was an answer that he would normally refuse. However, under the effects of the 150% appearance boost, women were invincible. Hyun-woo nodded as he missed the timing to refuse.

“If mother is okay with it.....then I don’t care.

“I’m glad. I thought I would have to visit secretly if Oppa said no.”

“What?”

“Ho ho ho, nothing. Anyway, today Oppa has walked me to my part time job. The guy that I work together with often teases me. If I go with Oppa then it won’t be like that from now on.”

“Why don’t I meet with him? Do you know? He might be a surprisingly good guy.”

“What?”

Jung Hye-sun raised an eyebrow and stared.

“I’m kidding, kidding. Okay, I’ll escort you there.”

“Bah, I won’t bring a soup next time.”

Jung Hye-sun turned her head with an annoyed face. Usually it was more than this. After it was decided, Hyun-woo was dragged off to the convenience store.

“So I’ll take this and go. I have to be connected to the game in 1 hour.

“Yes.”

Jung Hye-sun confirmed and blew out a sigh at Hyun-woo’s receding appearance.

‘Just like Jjak-tung oppa said. Hyun-woo oppa is weak to an aggressive woman.’

That’s right, Jung Hye-sung visiting the hospital with porridge and her bold behaviour on the road with Hyun-woo was all a part of Jjak-tung’s plan. Jung Hye-sung had a smile of victory on her mouth.

‘Ho ho ho, now I know how to catch Hyun-woo oppa.

The former criminal was terrifying. However, women were even more terrifying. Then a man secretly approached in the convenience store and asked.

“Hye-sun, who was that person just now?”

“That was my oppa that I previously told you about, isn’t he cool?”

Jung Hye-sun told the man bluntly who started to look uncomfortable.

“What does he do? I heard something about a match.....is he an athlete?”

“No it is a mixed martial arts match.

The man’s face paled at Jung Hye-sun’s answer. And in the future, there was a firm line around Jung Hye-sung.

## Hidden Power of the Rehabilitation Stage?

Chaotic NPC ‘Rehabilitation’ complete.

<Rehabilitation Bonus: Rehabilitated NPC x 5000 Experience and Alignment: Good +50>

-Your level has risen.

“Hyung-nim, we’ve finished rehabilitating all 30 people.”

“Hu hu hu, the nearby neighbourhoods are also clear.”

JusticeMan looked at the thieves with a heart-warming smile. JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members had a rewarding day today, implementing social justice.

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members were a single group. But thanks to them focusing on one thing, they often lost sight and the original goal and wandered off. It was the same even now. The reason that had left Jackson was to earn some fame at the Evil Silrion in order to become an autonomous police force. But their purpose changed once they met Lorenzo in Cairo. The purpose had changed to punishing the thieves that used to be Lorenzo’s hyungs. There were a lot of thieves who had the idea to hide in the vicinity of Selebrid. JusticeMan didn’t expect to discover them, since he didn’t have enough hints to search around.

‘Just like Ark said, to the NPCs this is the real world. In the long run, the users and NPCs in New World.....no, the user and NPC is different as the NPCs lives may be more precious. Still, since the thief was born as a thief, it wasn’t fair for them to die!’

But if left alone, the thieves would live a dismal life until a user happens to pass by and kills them for experience. They weren’t monsters, they were

NPCs that were similar to the village residents. Yet they were born as thieves just for the purpose of giving experience.

‘The only people that can help them is us.

JusticeMan mistakenly thought of himself as a saviour and burned with motivation.

‘If the rule of New World is that a thief was born to die, then I will change the rule!’

It was like the Roman emperor and the Lord, a dictator and a revolutionary warrior facing off against each other.....the Korean ex-detective had doubts about the system in New World and vowed to change it. This brought out unexpected results in the game system.

“Isn’t this a hundred times better than hunting?”

Jjak-tung asked after he confirmed the information window. JusticeMan, the rehabilitation members and the thieves were all around level 70. If they hunted a level 70 thief, they would only gain 1000 experience. But once they rehabilitated him, they would receive 5000 experiences, which was five times as much.

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation group was able to earn experience without killing the thieves. Thanks to that, JusticeMan was level 87. The rehabilitation members also had an average level of 70. But was that all? The NPCs of New World were simple. Thus, the inevitable result was that once the NPCs were confined, intimidated and tortured as well as being brainwashed by the rehabilitation group, there was a 100% success message and the thieves completely became new men.

“We’ve finally realised our mistakes.”

In fact, it wasn’t only the result of the system. The NPC thieves had also thought about walking away. But the only thing in their memories was persecution and sorrow.

They wanted to stop being thieves, but they had never been treated with hospitality by other NPCs and were only treated like thieves. Users would chase after them to earn some money and not even the guards who were NPCs like them would help. They weren't welcomed by users or NPCs. But it wasn't possible for them to be a monster.....that was the thieves' sad fate. But JusticeMan's party was different. Even though they were tortured, the thieves knew that the effect was for them. It was the first time that a user looked at them like they were NPCs, not experience or items! It was the earnest expression that they had never received in their whole lives.

“We will earnestly serve you for the rest of our lives.....”

“I didn't realize that you wished for someone to scold you.”

“Please call us Hyung-nim!”

“You are our saviours hyung-nims.

Rururu, Lalala.

If there was appropriate music, it would be like a touching scene from a movie. Thanks to that, JusticeMan's enthusiasm gauge was rising every day.

‘This is it! This is it! If you have a large heart then you will be rewarded. That's the world that I want!’

Back in his criminal chasing days, how many times had he put a criminal in prison only for them to commit the crime again after they were released? Even if they were persuaded, how many criminals were stabbed with a knife and died because they tried to change? But this place was different. If they sincerely repented then they were seriously reformed. But was that all? Weren't they also rewarded with experience points. For the first time, JusticeMan felt that something was truly worthwhile.

“These guys, they finally recognized our sincerity!”

JusticeMan shouted as he hugged the thieves and cried.

“Hyung-nim!”

“Now you really are new men and you should live trying to help the world.”

“Please lead us all the way!”

“Okay, from today you guys are my brothers! I’ll take responsibility for you until the end!”

Aaah, it was a really emotional scene that couldn’t be seen without tears.....however, there was a very serious problem.

“JusticeMan ajusshi!”

During the emotional scene, a fierce voice was heard. Jump! JusticeMan and the rehabilitation group flinched and swallowed their saliva. Even if dozens of thieves ran up to them with sashimi knives, JusticeMan and the rehabilitation group didn’t even blink. But there was an existence that scared them. She was holding a lute and staring with sharp eyes, the ultimate weapon of the rehabilitation group Roco. JusticeMan smiled awkwardly and turned his head.

“Eh? Hahahah, Roco, you came?”

“What did I say before I left yesterday?”

“Eh.....you said.”

JusticeMan avoided her gaze and sent uneasy looks to the rehabilitation members. SOS! Rescue requested! But the rehabilitation members looked at the distant mountains and pretended ignorance.

“Hey, isn’t that mountain wonderful?”

“Indeed. We should climb it later.”

‘Those, those traitors.....!’

JusticeMan ground his teeth together as Roco approached.

“Did you decide to increase the guests staying in a person’s home for a

while? Didn't you?"

"That, I did do that. You sound so severe. It was needed."

"You can't help it if it's for justice. Is that right?"

"That, yes. Justice! It's for justice!"

JusticeMan nodded and said. However, he became silent as Roco said some cold words.

"Is justice going to feed them?"

"....."

Yes, that was a serious problem. Over the past few days, JusticeMan and his party had rehabilitated 100 thieves around Selebrid. Well, it was good up to that point. Aside from the experience, more than anything it was about contributing good to world peace. But the problem was that JusticeMan didn't think about the overall situation. The thieves were chaotic NPCs. So naturally they couldn't live in the town. But since they were rehabilitated and couldn't steal any more, there was no way for them to make a living.

JusticeMan hadn't thought of the thieves' situation. He accepted them all as colleagues and provided them room and food. He was apprehensive at first but they managed fine.

The rehabilitation group also had a lot of money and there weren't that many thieves. When the thieves were rehabilitated, they also participated in future battles adding to the offensive power. However, after the numbers reached 50 and began moving to 100, they encountered a serious problem. The hardships of life!

If it was a dream then it would be possible to live, but New World was an entirely different situation! Of course, money was needed to live. At first, the rehabilitation party made the thieves recycle mouse, fish and shellfish. However, after the thieves increased to 100 people, it was normal to make them watch wheat bread all day. Although the rehabilitation members

initially provided money, after two days they stopped. For 100 people, they needed at least 300 bread per day even if they didn't battle. Of course, the rehabilitation group immediately ran out of money. However, JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members were poor with matters regarding economics. They were men who could only use power. It wasn't a desirable condition and their satiety would soon decrease.....In addition, they still had their old habits from living in the darkness, and even if they didn't have money to buy wheat bread, they would spend it on drinks and ladies. After a few days, it would be a situation where the rehabilitation group and the thieves would have to skip a meal after a battle. But if they thought about the penalty when satiety falls below 50%, it was just like committing suicide.

‘Only Oppa still doesn't believe it!’

Roco had finally felt a sense of crisis.

‘If we aren't prepared, everyone will starve and die!’

The economic crisis of the rehabilitation group made the girl's talent bloom. In reality, Roco was a girl from a respectable family. Until now, she hadn't suffered from following JusticeMan and the rehabilitation group, but this situation was different. Moreover, it wasn't possible to separate from the rehabilitation group since that would mean separating from Ark.

Even in the middle of a crisis, her mind was still on Ark.

‘Even if dirt enters my eye, I will never ask Ark oppa for money! I must protect Oppa's assets!’

Roco made up her mind while thinking about Ark.

“JusticeMan ajusshi and oppa have no concept of economics. It is necessary for us to save our money. I will manage all of our money from now on. Everybody empty their purses.”

Roco took control of their finances.

“Ha, but Roco, this.....”

Of course, there was resistance at first. Heh, it was a strange resistance.

“Huk, Oppa doesn’t believe in me? I’m just worried about oppa. I believe that I can do it. Are you not trusting your money with me because I’m a woman?”

“Ah, no. Does it seem that way?”

The rehabilitation members were surprised and quickly emptied their pockets. The rehabilitation group’s weak point was a woman. Just like that, Roco seized control of the group’s finances and gradually expanded her power.

“I like that you’re rehabilitating the thieves. But what will you do after you’ve rehabilitated them? How will they survive? Bring the thieves along when monster hunting. But they need to obtain money from leather and meat! Because there will be no rice for those who don’t fulfil their quota.”

So JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members lead the thieves to hunt and obtain a rice meal. But there was one complaint. Roco holds all of the party’s finances. In addition, if they didn’t listen to what she had to say then she would threaten them with her ultimate weapon, tears. Anyway, Roco’s housekeeping skills was superior to theirs.

Pickpocketing, wild animal meat, skinning leather and so on.....

The rehabilitation members could use their various skills to increases the profits from the hunt. Every time they used their skills, they would hide some of the meat. But if Roco was watching then leather would be skinned and meat sold and the pay divided.

In addition, they used fraud and intimidation to reduce spending as much money as possible. Under Roco’s dictatorship, their financial conditions gradually improved. That was because Roco wasn’t exploiting the rehabilitation members and the thieves.

“Because today’s earnings were decent, we can eat meat instead of wheat bread.”

Fortunately, JusticeMan’s party could have meat soup with rice once every two days. But was that all? Apart from income, armour and weapons were also split between the thieves. It was inevitable. The thieves that accompanied JusticeMan were ignorant and would sometimes die while hunting.

“Why is it hard to hunt? A good armour would make it a little bit safer.”

“Oh, give these to the thieves as a warm consideration.”

“A saint! This person is a saint!”

The thieves were especially thrilled as they had never received the warmth of a woman. Thanks to that, Roco had now established herself as the hidden power in the rehabilitation group. Roco even retained control over JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members. But that was only when Roco was logged on. When Roco wasn’t at her desk for even a short while, JusticeMan and the rest of the group got out of control. Without worrying about the budget, they would increase the number of rehabilitated thieves, which was the situation right now.

.....Roco sighed.

“I told you before leaving. All the money has gone into changing the thieves’ armour. That’s why I told you to take the other rehabilitation members and thieves hunting while I was gone.....at this rate, I don’t know how all these men will survive. I will keep repeating it even if it makes me the bad person.”

“That is.....I’m sorry.”

JusticeMan patted her shoulder with a grumpy face.

“It isn’t possible to keep on doing that. You must promise instead not to

rehabilitate any more thieves from the capital. Until our livelihood improves a little bit, we're only going to concentrate on hunting.”

“We'll do as you said.”

JusticeMan replied, scratching his head with an embarrassed expression.

“In fact, the guys that we rehabilitated this time knows the location of the hyungs that we were looking for. Can't I rehabilitate just that guy? It would make it easier.”

“Ajusshi!”

Roco shouted, causing JusticeMan to flinch.

“Jeez, you know that thing is difficult. Understood.....If we move immediately then we'll be able to return to Selebrid to watch Ark fight in the tournament. Ark is also spending a while in this map.....”

At the mention of Ark, Roco's expression relaxed. After she pulled out her bag and checked the balance, she shook her head.

“Okay, I'll allow it one more time.”

“I see. Understood!”

“Then please take off those clothes for the time being. Ayu, it smells. That was from one day? Jjak-tung oppa, please collect all the thieves clothes as well.”

“Huh? Understood. Hey you guys, take off your armour!”

Although she washed out her eyes, while looking after JusticeMan, the rehabilitation members and the thieves, her housekeeping skills blossomed. Cooking, laundry, cleaning and so on.....

And in the online game, additional effects were added for those skills. Roco was especially skilled with laundry. If she washed any cloth or leather armour, its defense would increase by 5% for up to 4 hours. Of course, that

was a side effect of her doing the laundry. Because it was a too realistic game, she had to do the laundry in order to get rid of the bad smells. Although she didn't say anything, deep down it was hard for her to bear.

"At any rate, men are similar to children and women."

Roco pouted as she headed to the stream with the laundry. A person tilted his head to the side and asked sullenly.

"By the way, doesn't Roco seem exceptionally excited these days?"

"Huhuhu, I know why."

Jjak-tung replied with a laugh.

"Roco is also a woman."

At that time, Ark had an 8 game winning streak and was in the quarter-finals. Obviously, the fights became increasingly difficult. Even though he had some PVP experience, there was still a variety of professions Ark hadn't fought against yet. In his fights against Andel, Hargen and Leo, all of them were warriors. Since every profession has unique skills, he would get lost every time. In addition, the pairs match wasn't a simple 1 on 1 fight. That means he would have to deal with both opponents instead of just one. The combination of professions people could select in a multiple profession RPG game was a very important factor.

By themselves, a warrior would be able to face 5 monsters, but if they were joined by a cleric then they would be able to fight against fifteen or even twenty monsters. The charm of an RPG game wasn't '1+1=2,' but it was more exciting if it was times time that and reached 100. And there was a combination of professions that were most effective in a pairs match.

The combination of warrior and necromancer in the first fight was one of the most common. The warrior-priest, warrior-archer, magician-priest, magician-thief.....Due to the number of combinations, there were infinite strategies available and the users should research and develop their own strategies. One combination that was particularly hard to deal with was the combination of magician-magician they met in the top 16. The damage of the magician that was over level 100 was enormous. When their advanced fire magic, 30% of his health was lost with one blow. But the true threat with a magician-magician combination was the ‘Willpower Exchange.’

‘Willpower exchange’ was the sharing of magic among the magicians. When ‘Willpower exchange’ was activated, mana could be shared among the magicians and the spell damage was also doubled. The horrible fire magic which decreased his health by 50% with one blow was created. Thanks to that, Ark and Shambala were in a critical condition.

If Ark tried to use ‘Riposte’ in a moment of crisis then he would just be completely roasted. On the other hand, the match became less tricky once Ark used his nursing skill.

Their main weapon was the mental-based magic. However, Ark used his nursing skill to increase their resistance to the mental magic and received a ‘Heart of the Caretaker’ bonus. The nursing skill had a surprisingly powerful effect on the match. When nursing was used, the strength and willpower of the receiver would rise. Although it didn’t directly recover health, an increase in willpower would strengthen their natural resilience. When the resilience increased, it was similar to receiving an overall stat buff.

A combination that was even trickier was the warrior-warrior pair they fought in the next match. Just like Justin, they doped themselves just before entering the stadium. When looking at them, he instantly thought of the phase ‘money is power.’ They spent dozens of gold on potions which they stacked up 3 times, and appeared in the tournament with huge bodies. In order to reach the

top 8, they probably invested hundreds of gold. But after Ark had met the doped up warrior from the first round, he made his own preparations. The system allowed for Ark to use his survival cooking and raise his stats in the match. First of all, Ark and Shambala were good to each other. The two of them had a good impression of each other from the first time they met and that applied to when they fought together. It was like their hands and feet were well suited together. At first, Ark thought it was because Shambala had trained in martial arts just like him, but in the tournament he realized it wasn't so simple. He had met many people in the Evil Silrion who also learnt martial arts. Indeed, the tournament format tended to have higher odds for people who learnt martial arts. However, they didn't match well with Ark and Shambala.

Although they only learnt it later, but it was the influence from their two professions.

Dark Walker and Saint Assassin. They were two professions with similar skills and characteristics, and there were many times when their function strangely complemented each other.

For example.....

“Petrification of Blood!

Shambala used his ‘Petrification of Blood’ skill. When the skill was used, red spots would appear it was possible to stun the opponent for 20 seconds. But their defensive power at the time was at 500% so it wasn't possible for him to do any damage. It was a skill that was used so that he could deal with a large number of enemies. However, the situation was different when Ark followed up with an attack.

“Dark blade!”

An attack that ignored defense and landed a critical hit! In the end, the 500% increase to defense was like a sandfish. They suffered continuous critical hits

in their petrified state. Was it only that? Above all, the degree of harmony for the two of them was the best for basic skills. Ark learned Sword-Hand combat, which was a technique that took advantage of any gaps in the enemies attack. On the other hand, Shambala used Kung Fu which had the effect of creating a gap in the opponent's attack. Their natural battle system was that Shambala would create a gap which Ark would take advantage of to attack.

Of course, it wasn't easy to use this battle system in the Evil Silrion where the fight was always changing every moment. But using Shambala's Kung Fu skills, it wasn't difficult to overcome those problems. In fact, Shambala's standard was quite high and it wasn't easy for Ark to follow in the early stages. As the fights continued, Ark gradually managed to match Shambala's pace.

‘Honestly, I hate to admit it.....’

Lee Myung-ryong's training showed no effect on the outside. But sparring with boxing, wrestling and taekwondo developed his ability to adapt to circumstances.

“Now, Ark!”

Shambala shouted as he stabbed the warrior with his dagger. Ark used Shambala like a stair case and flew forward. The warrior was astonished and lifted his sword above his head. However, Ark stepped on the shield and landed behind him, turned and then kicked the warrior in the head.

“No way!”

The warrior stumbled as he received a critical hit. At the same time, Shambala's and Ark's eyes were glittering. Afterwards, Shambala attacked with a whirlwind.

Ark continued with a spin kick. Shambala's attack had the possibility of stunning the opponent. Abnormal conditions could be caused by Ark's kicks,

but the probability was quite low. However, when the opponent was hit by two different attacks, the probabilities increased. Once they were trapped, it was impossible for them to escape. Thus, it was named ‘Whirlwind of Death.’ In the end, the warrior’s body shrivelled like a balloon because the doping effects disappeared and died.

The magic eye had been watching while holding his breath and finally shouted.

-They did it! Dark Wolf and Blue Sword! They defeated the favourites, who were like monsters thanks to the various medications, using surprising acrobatics and advanced to the top 4! As expected, the last winning combination was the Whirlwind of death!

“That’s it! I paid the expensive entrance fee to see that combo today!”

-Ohhh, Blue Sword was great, but the biggest event in this tournament right now is Dark Wolf. Who would have expected? Everybody is talking about the unknown Dark Wolf who appeared for the first time in this tournament! Combined with Blue Sword who has won several times in the solo tournaments, they have quickly broken through the top 8! There is a sold out crowd every time they have a match! Bravo!

“Wahahah!”

“Dark Wolf and Blue Sword are the best!”

Under thunderous applause, Ark and Shambala returned to the waiting room.

‘Huhuhu, this feeling is surprisingly good?’

Ark had a satisfied smile. The sound of thousands of spectators applauding was quite inspiring for his mood. At first, it was just frightening but after he adapted, it became exhilarating pleasure.

“You’re now quite a decent partner.”

“Grrrr, good? This much is perfect.”

“Don’t be too giddy. There are still two matches left.”

“Grrrrr, I know.”

“Anyway, the tournament has ended for today. Let’s separate for the rest of the day.’

“Grr? Where do you go so busily every day?”

“There is something I must discover in Selebrid. It’s information related to my profession so you don’t need to know the details. Anyway, don’t be late to the match tomorrow.”

Shambala said as he changed his mask and mantle in the waiting room. He changed his mask and mantle so that people wouldn’t recognize Shambala. Of course, since Ark could transform his face he didn’t have to worry about that. However, once he transformed he couldn’t reuse it for 24 hours. When they left the waiting room, they had to leave separately.

“Look, it’s Dark Wolf!”

“Wah, his force is really different!”

When Ark exited the Evil Silrion, people’s interest was immediately concentrated on him. Normally, their attention would be a burden but at the moment, he had changed into a wolf form. If people continued to be interested in him while transformed then there was no need to be worried about his normal state. He didn’t have to worry about other people’s gaze while doing event quests.

‘I’m also depending on it to compete safely in the Evil Silrion.’

Ark smile warmly. At first, he hadn’t been happy about participating in the Evil Silrion since it didn’t give any money or experience. However, as he continued fighting in the matches he discovered a unexpected effect.

‘My skill proficiency increases several times faster!’

During a fight, his skill proficiency would go up considerably. When thinking about it, it was the inevitable result. In New World, skill proficiency wasn't affected by how much it was used. The important thing was how intensively it was used. Because of that, the skill always increased faster when fighting against a monster that he had met for the first time. When fighting something for the first time, he is always much more concentrated. However, no matter how difficult the monster, they would become easy after killing them several times. This was because they had a certain pattern of attack so the growth of his skills would slow down. In the Evil Silrion, he was always fighting opponents with new styles. In addition, his opponents weren't ordinary monsters.

They were users armed with a variety of skills, just like Ark! When he fought against someone of high standard, of course his skill would grow at a tremendous speed. Thanks to that, his Sword Mastery increased to the advanced level.

“Skill check!”

Sword-Hand Combat (Advanced, Passive 316/500): You have become an expert in Sword-Hand combat. You are able to use any kind of swordsmanship and the destructive power would also increase. You will receive additional damage on every type of sword as well as knuckles, and your evasion rate and critical hit probability would increase.

<Overall combat power increases by 40%. When wearing a shield, the effects of Sword-Hand combat disappears.>

\* Additional effects: Chance of a kick hitting a small monster 8%, medium monster 5% and 2% chance of causing an abnormal status on a large monster. When difficult techniques succeed, the probability of causing an abnormal status increases.

Increasing his basic skill raised his general attack power. Furthermore, the probability of triggering an abnormal state also increased. That was the

reason that the Whirlwind of death was possible in the last match.

His adrenaline and counter attack skills also increased to the intermediate level. When adrenaline rose, his reaction rate in a critical condition also rose, and the chances of a successful counterattack also increased. Naturally, his chain skill Riposte became more powerful as well. It was even possible to succeed when the warrior was further than 10 metres away from him!

‘There is no other great place to raise my skills.’

Ark also experienced situations where the skill growth would stop and that was useful information.

“Master, I’m here.”

Then, someone called from the side alley. It was Dedric who was transformed into a small boy with slicked back hair. Ark laughed as he approached Dedric.

“Grrrrrr, how was it? The odds are?”

“Because you’ve kept winning, the odds fell a little bit. This time it was 1.2. Here is 76 gold.”

“Kukuku, the upper limit is high and the earning is better than before.”

In fact, this was one of the reasons why Ark didn’t summon Dedric during the match.

It was a tournament where people could bet money on the pair that would win. Of course, the gambling part of the Evil Silrion had a few limitations in order to prevent fraud. First, users and NPCs could only bet on the user’s victory when the match was a user versus a monster. This was intentional so that they wouldn’t rig a game against the monster. And for the tournaments where it was user against user, there was an upper limit that existed when betting money. The first match 10 gold, second match 20 gold.....It also wasn’t possible to double the amount of profits received. In addition,

participants were unable to participate directly in the gambling. But Ark couldn't miss out on the chance to make money. Before the tournament started, Ark summoned Dedric in order to make money. Of course, he had every intention of winning the bets. In the first round, he scraped all his money together from selling japtem and bet 10 gold. The odds for the first round were 1.8. It was quite high. Shambala was a strong favourite even though Ark was unknown, and Justin and Dior were also well known names so the dividends were raised. Thanks to that he made 18 gold, and the odds in the second round was 1.5 so he made back 27 gold. The increased awareness of Ark meant that the odds kept on getting lower. But because the upper limit restriction rose, he could still earn money and he made at least 10 gold with every match. When there were two or three games a day, he earned an average of 20-30 gold.

‘Although I’m not completely satisfied, the earnings are acceptable.’

‘Where there is a will then there is money.’

That was Ark’s motto. Ark laughed while holding the purse, and when he noticed Dedric asked.

“Master, you feel good right? Am I not a good person because of I made you money? So give me some money so I can buy food.”

“Grrrrrrr, what the?”

Ark’s countenance immediately stiffened. In Selebrid, there were thousands of street venders where users gathered. Merchants who have learnt to cook would make tempting snacks and sell them. Although Dedric claimed to be 300 years old, his appearance was that of a young boy.

“Grrr, I don’t always make disgusting food!”

“Ugh, how is that food? It’s torture.”

“Noisy, the outer appearance is not the only thing plausible about food. Isn’t it known that food that is good for you tastes bitter? Instead of talking, you

should eat the food I give you.”

“Sometimes I also want to eat tasty food! It’s unjust money! Since you came by the money unjustly, can’t it be used sometimes? I even went to the Evil Silrion and did some unfair gambling for you.”

“Grrrrr! Unjust money?”

Ark snorted and said.

“What do you think all our money is used for? Your master has fought with blood, sweat and tears to make money. Don’t you know I did that in order for us to live and eat well? Do you know how money was used to make you grow well?”

“Sheesh, and now you want pocket money What about clothes? The cost of the ingredients also wasn’t free.”

“I bought expensive spices and ingredients and poured it into the food you ate.....doesn’t that also cost money? And I also wasted a lot of money and sweat educating you guys. Man, tears are obscuring my sight. Nevertheless, haven’t I still been earning money for you? Yet you want to make me a beggar?”

“Sheesh, is it that difficult for you to part with 5 copper?”

“When copper is gathered it becomes silver and then silver becomes gold.”

This was Ark’s unchanging view on life. In the real world, Ark would never spend money on anything except the minimum calories needed to survive. Even if the weather became chilly and the roadside stalls sent him tempting looks, Ark never succumbed to the temptation. But now his pet was trying to tempt him to part with money? Over food? Although he was frugal with his money, he was happy to buy a fruit basket for his mother.

“Then do you want me to make a similar food for you?”

“Whoa, it’s dirty and black. I won’t eat, don’t make me eat it! Damn, I met

the wrong master!"

He got annoyed with Dedric and returned him to the Netherworld.

'Hmm, is it time to discipline those guys again?'

Deimos had become distracted with bones while Dedric was openly rebellious.

'Since I have a lot of time these days, should I discipline them?'

Ark was seriously contemplating it. Suddenly someone's voice was heard from inside the alley.

"Are you really certain?"

"Don't worry. This tournament is a joke for us."

"Only two people are needed."

The voice spoke from somewhere. Since it was a dark night, he was cautious. Ark hid his body using 'Stealth' and peeked inside the alley.

'Are they.....?'

Inside the alley were users from the Evil Silrion. It was the user wearing the mask with a five star design. It was the two pioneers that were eager to fight Shambala. Three hooded people with large builds were confronting them. The three of them observed the surroundings before taking a large breath.

"Although we recruited players using our information network, all of them have fallen. Now you two are the only ones remaining."

"I told you so from the beginning. Other people aren't needed if we're there. Thanks to that, the number of matches increased and thousands of hours wasted. You morons."

"But....."

"But if the identity of the secret map is correct, then we would have the money to hire as much people as we want. You wouldn't be so eager for an

ordinary treasure map. Did you obtain some useful information?”

“That, I can’t tell you that. It is top secret information.....”

After he was pressed, the person inside the hood used confused words. Then, the eyes of the pioneer Jewel narrowed.

“Well, that’s okay. We aren’t particularly interested. Only a beginner cares about treasure maps. But about that earlier price you promised.”

“Yes? What is it? Didn’t we already sign a contract with the NPC?”

“We did. But we did so thinking it wouldn’t take that much time. You didn’t believe us and hired more guys so it has taken twice as long. Naturally we should revise the agreement. Don’t you think? After looking at the situation, I think it should be twice as much. An extra 1000 gold to the promised 500. So 1,500 gold in total.”

“We don’t have that type of money!”

One hooded person took a deep breath and exclaimed.

“If you don’t like it then we can just cancel the agreement. And I’ll search for other people to buy the map. Well, we could also search for the treasure directly.”

“If you break the contract.....”

The penalty of breaking a contract didn’t only apply to the merchant who made it. If a contract was signed and received, then the penalty applied to everyone involved. But strangely, Jewel just laughed and said.

“We’re pioneers. Do you think we’re scared of something like that?”

“.....It isn’t useful to you. But 1000 gold is important for the person that would lose it.”

“That’s our requirement.”

Jewel spoke in a firm tone. Of course, Jewel had no thoughts about treasure

hunting. But there was a reason the people that hired her wanted that specific item. Perhaps it had information about enormous profit or was related to a quest or profession. Therefore, she had no intention of transferring it obediently for the agreed upon price. Ark who was hiding also nodded.

‘Hmmm, Jewel knows how to make a deal.’

In this situation, it wasn’t possible to assume that Jewel was bad. Rather, the weakness that the hooded person showed was bad. Therefore, it was natural to attempt to get as much profit as possible. Anyway, the hooded users exchanged worried glances. But in the end they were forced to agree.

“Okay. 1,500 gold.”

“Good. Have it prepared for when the two matches end tomorrow.”

Jewel spoke in a satisfied look and disappeared out of the other side. The hooded figures immediately cursed.

“Sheesh, they’re like robbers, 1500 gold for one tournament!”

It’s times like these that I feel like I chose the wrong profession. Hyung-nim.”

“Although it’s regrettable, we have no other choice. We have to believe in those guys.”

“But it is 1,500 gold.....wouldn’t we be struggling as soon as we lose all that money?”

“You don’t have to worry.”

The man they called hyung-nim muttered in a low voice.

“This is the quest that a Grandmaster from one of the top guilds gave directly. The other day, I heard that one person who received a grandmaster quest took two months to complete it. The compensation he received was a rare skill and an additional 4,000 gold. In other words, the reward for this quest would be a minimum of 4,000 gold.”

The eyes of the rest of the hooded figures turned to gold. It was an obvious response. 4,000 gold! That was 40 million won!

“But for now we must sell our items and make 1,050 gold. Those guys don’t appear likely to help us without that.”

One hooded figure rummaged through their pockets before sighing.

“We still have time before the finals. We’ll find a way to raise the money in the meantime.”

“Hukhukhuk, does that mean an additional debt?”

“Don’t cry. It’s not good to become too indebted. But think of it as an investment. It is really lucky that I have received the Grandmaster’s quest. No matter what happens, we have to seize this opportunity to live. We’re betting everything on this.”

“Yes, I understand. But even if we obtain the supplementary prize, the other 2 items are in those guys hands. What is your plan?”

“Hu hu hu.”

The man called Hyung-nim wore a wily smile.

“That’s why this supplementary prize is especially important. If we are holding one of the three clues then those guys can’t find the treasure. It would become useless to them. Then, you offer them a deal for a sneak peek.”

“Would they easily accept the deal?”

“That’s our specialty. We’ll persuade them and have the contract be stamped with a seal. Well, we can also use other methods. The important thing is that we have one of the clues. If we don’t then there is no chance for us.”

“As expected of Hyung-nim!”

“Huhuhu, that’s right.

“Huhuhuhu. It’s like that.”

The hooded figures laughed sinisterly.

‘What the, this is?’

Ark stared blankly from directly behind them.....

## Finals

‘How many quests does this item overlap with?’

Ark’s mind became complicated. When he received the <Genius Alchemist’s Laboratory> quest, he didn’t think it was that serious. He expected some decent compensation. He decided that it was only a little bit better than normal quests. But that wasn’t the case. Whenever there was a quest where a specific item was needed and there were no limitations on the number of that item, then there would be many people who have received the quest. If one restriction of the quest was friendship points, then the items couldn’t be shared. Several people would receive the quest and consequently most of them were bound to fail.

‘In order for me to receive the quest, it was necessary to have a lot of friendship points with the Magic Institute. Shambala received the quest from a quest item. As the items couldn’t be shared, one of them had to give up the quest. But there were also other people who received the quest?’

Furthermore, the place where they received the quest wasn’t ordinary. Last night, Ark shadowed the three people. But he soon lost them in a restricted area. The place where they went to was Midus, the merchant guild.

‘They said they received the quest from the Grandmaster. Then.....?’

The Grandmaster was probably from the Merchant Guild. Ark’s employer was also the Grandmaster of the Magic Institute. In other words two of the top three guilds, the Magic Institute and the Merchant Guild were involved. So let’s think about it. The NPCs of New World don’t move abruptly without any justification. This was the justification of the Grandmaster of the Magic Institute. Since Magaro was a member of the Magic Institute, the research materials that he left behind belonged to them. Therefore, it was justifiable to regain it. Then what about the Grandmaster of the Merchant Guild? There

was no obvious reason at the moment. However, he had a small idea. Magaro was a well-known genius alchemist. The research from his later years would therefore be worth a lot of money. Even if it wasn't directly used by the Merchant Guild, it was possible to use it in political negotiations with the Magic Institute. That was the rough idea that he immediately thought of.

‘The three big guilds are political rivals. Naturally they would spy on and try to outmanoeuvre each other. And the movement of the Magic Institute was trying to discover Magaro’s lost legacy. Then the Merchant Guild quickly took action. If so.....Shambala finding the diary might be 100% due to chance, but the appearance of the secret map in the Evil Silrion shows that it might not be a coincidence. The Merchant Guild is probably behind this tournament in order to discover the other users who have found clues.....’

Perhaps it wasn’t only the Merchant Guild.

‘While normally 100 people participate on average, this tournament had more than 1,000 applications. Many large guilds are also gathering to go to Nagaran.’

The hooded figures hired some players, but it was impossible for them to have hired 900 people. In that case, maybe other powers have intervened in the quest.

“Then out of the three guilds, the one with the highest chances of intervening is the Warrior Guild. The quest is probably something similar to bringing them the injury prize from this tournament.....if that is the case.....”

The situation was becoming quite interesting. Of course, Ark wasn’t interested in something like the three guilds’ power struggle. He also wasn’t didn’t want to compete with other users for the quest. The point that Ark found interesting was that the Merchant Guild made its move following the Grandmaster of the Magic Institute’s action. This meant that there was likely to be a huge reward!

‘If the guy who received a quest from the Grandmaster was rewarded with 4,000 gold, then the compensation for this quest would be at least that much!’

Without a doubt, it would be a large amount of money! Indeed, the hooded men were willing to pay 1,500 gold to Jewel for the secret map. Money was the most important thing to a merchant. If the rewards for the quest was uncertain, they wouldn’t have been willing to part with that amount of money. In other words, this quest was guaranteed to have a large profit!

‘I could get thousands of gold from one quest!’

Ark’s pupils turned to gold. If he did well then he might be rewarded with rare potions or scrolls as well as gold.

‘Huhuhu, unexpectedly I received some good information. I’m lucky that I transformed myself. While I can guess their real identities, they can’t guess mine. I have the upper hand.’

Ark hid the information from Shambala. Shambala still didn’t know how large this quest was. Since he had already received the quest, he only wanted to complete it if it was possible. However, if he knew about the huge reward then he might change his mind.

In the worst case, he might require more in exchange for the diary.

‘That’s not possible. This is my quest! My money!’

And Shambala couldn’t afford to listen to such talk. The semi-finals and finals were on the same day. 1 hour ago, Ark and Shambala had won in the semi-finals and now they were waiting for the next match in the waiting room.

In the meantime, Shambala sat down with crossed legs and closed his eyes. The posture of a person who learnt Kung Fu and was concentrating his mind was remarkable. Thanks to that, Ark was unable to breathe properly and sat a distance away. Then, a shout was heard along the suddenly loud passages.

-The opponents for the winners of the previous match, team 14 Blue Sword and Dark Wolf have been decided! It is team 89 who defeated their opponents in only 3 minutes with overwhelming skill!

Now the only match remaining is to determine the final winner. In 5 minutes, a special match will be held and then it will be the final match of the hotter than ever 186th Pairs tournament!

Shambala's eyes flashed in response to the televised announcement. His eyes moved to Ark."As expected, the final opponents are the pioneers."

"Arc, this time we'll fight separately."

"Grr?"

"Among the pioneers, the magician Jewel is mine. I have to pay back my debt. With my own hands....."

"Is this because of what happened the other day?"

He had surprisingly childish parts to him. Ark asked with a smile. However, Shambala spoke seriously with no signs of a laugh.

"That's not the reason. Because this game was not the first time that I've seen the ID Jewel."

Once he looked in his eyes, Ark realized that there was another serious matter. If it was an NPC, they would kindly listen but if it was a user then they would question it closely. But if it didn't have anything to do with the quest or the money then he wasn't interested. When his 40 year old uncles would drink alcohol and recite history, he had no interest. Fortunately, Shambala didn't make a fuss with his story.

"Anyway, in this tournament let's go with individual combat. I think even Jewel intends to fight this way."

"Grrr, I also prefer it like that....."

Even though simple, a magician's magic could vary widely depending on the type they studied. Therefore, magic had the largest scope of study.

If someone prefers dealing elemental damage, they would become a sorcerer that has a lot of magic to deal with many opponents. There was also a wide variety of magical buffs but the one that was used by two or more magicians 'Willpower exchange' was particularly outstanding. That's why magicians favoured being in a party the most. Meanwhile, the Warlock was a dark magician that specialized in PVP. Warlocks had no magic to help in a party. Instead their buff or protective magic could only be used on themselves, and they were often clad in something to increase their damage. In New World, the warlock was the ultimate damage dealer.

"Grrr, are you sure you can beat her by yourself?"

"I honestly don't know."

Ark was slightly amazed at Shambala's answer. He thought that Shambala was confident about winning. Naturally, the pioneers were strong. But if it was the confident Shambala saying this, then his partner wasn't behaving boldly anymore.

"Are they that strong? The pioneers?"

"I fought them one month ago. I clearly remember the memory from that time and used it for image training. The amount of victories was 7 to 3. It wasn't unexpected for Jewel who had been fighting for a month. So at that point it was considered 5 to 5."

"Grrr, it's the case where I wouldn't be able to understand until I see it in person."

Shambala silently nodded.

"That's right. I haven't fought against a warlock yet. Therefore, individual combat might be easier than fighting together. Since I don't know how great the pioneers are, let's just go out and try it."

Then, after the special match ended the loudspeaker made an announcement again. The final match will begin in 10 minutes. After Ark heard the broadcast, he immediately took out his pot.

“The only thing I can do is prepare for some bleeding. Okay. Bleeding is released. Snake, please give me the materials for ‘Racing Cocktail’, ‘Hot Syrup Cake’, and ‘Drink with refreshing taste.’

Ssak ssak ssak!

At Ark’s command, Snake spat out a handful of ingredients. It was quite annoying looking through his bag every time he wanted to make a dish. Therefore he made Snake remember each recipe off by heart, so that it could spit out the ingredients just from the name of the dish. Thanks to that, the time hunting for ingredients was reduced and he could grasp the different flavours of the dish.

‘What happens to the pets also depends on the master.’

The price of Snake’s effort was a simple stroke on the head sometimes. Anyway, it was already the final match. If they lost then all his efforts so far would be in vain.

Ark also used ingredients that weren’t easy to find in his dishes. The cocktail increases the reaction rate, the cake boosted power while the drinks boosted magical resistance and so on.....they were rare dishes without any side effects. Of course, it was less effective than the drugs that the warriors would dope themselves with. However, doping drugs were often only for warriors. Maybe because the effects of the drug were strong, but the warrior’s physical strength was needed to resist it completely. On the other hand, his dishes had no restriction on the professions and the duration was also longer than the drugs. And it was much cheaper. If Ark wanted to make a dish with a similar effect to the drugs then it would cost him 100 gold. Even so, the sight of a black wolf squatting down to cook was.....a little strange.

“Grrr, it’s done!”

Anyway, Ark instantly produced a buffet style meal. It was ten medicinal dishes that Ark had carefully selected.

“Shambala, I’ll do my best to help you with your revenge. So eat to your heart’s content.”

“Thank you.”

Shambala picked a dish and looked impressed before eating it. Ark’s eyes flashed at the sight.

“I’m also a person. Because it’s hot, the price is half off. One dish is 5 gold.”

“.....”

Shambala coughed as he was caught and stared at Ark. Was he really trying to get money from this? His glowing eyes seemed to ask. Ark silently nodded his head.

“Catering is expensive you know? But that’s between you and me. Since I took of the labour costs, shouldn’t you be thankful?”

Shambala was at a loss for words.

Putt putt pow!

The tournament had spread out for a long time over six days and it was finally time for the final match. As expected for the finals, the stage and special effects was really different. When Ark and Shambala entered the stadium, colourful fireworks were lit up and the stadium had been divided into four arenas which had the attention of as many as 10,000 spectators. Because there were an unprecedeted number of participants, users and NPCs flocked like bees. There were even VIP seats at the stadium, where the nobility NPC stood out.

-Now, they have come! The brave black wolf warrior who has heated up the Evil Silrion even though he is new, Dark Wolf! And the undisputed leader of the solo matches who won many times, Blue Sword! Please give a huge round of applause!

“Wah ah ah!”

“At last. Please give us an excellent show!”

“I bet 100 gold on you guys!”

The crowd screamed as they gained momentum.

-And confronting them are Jewel and Duke. Surprisingly, they were the first strangers to walk on this land and are known as the first foreigners, a pioneer. They also showed amazing ability and finished every match within 3 minutes. A fight with the rising newcomers against the pioneers! No one can expect what kind of match will occur when the old and new warriors clash.....Oh, as expected the odds are even at 1.5-1.5 each!

The pioneers Jewel and Duke were introduced by the magic eye and appeared on the opposite side.

-Now, these warriors who have defeated numerous enemies to reach the final match stand confronting each other. Do I need to say anything more? Let's start the match immediately. First, let's select the arena.....

The eyeballs of the magic eye rolled around. Its eyes turned silver and looked like a slot machine.

‘Pandemonium!’

A vague smile spread on Ark's mouth. Pandemonium was an arena that he had already experienced. It was a place where the ancient ruins of the game were spread. It was laid out like a complicated labyrinth, making it difficult to remember the way. But the most extraordinary aspect of this fight was the roof. Roof.....That's right. Pandemonium was crafted like a dungeon!

‘Luck has followed me.’

A battle in the darkness was something that Ark naturally desired. As a Dark Walker, Ark received a 40% boost to all his abilities in the darkness. Thanks to that, he was around level 140 without any special doping. It was also possible to use ‘stealth’ in this situation. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that this arena seemed especially crafted for Ark. In addition, Shambala was a Saint Assassin and assassins also received various bonuses in the dark that was equal to Ark’s. Then Jewel muttered in the distance.

“If it’s Pandemonium.....do you remember fighting here in the past? That match where you became like a dust cloth?”

“Grr?”

Ark looked at Shambala in surprise after the unexpected words. Shambala muttered with an expression that looked like he was chewing poo.

“Jewel’s profession is a Dark Stalker among the warlocks. The bonus that she gets from the dark is just as good as ours. And there are many powerful spells that can be used only in the dark. The dungeon arena won’t give us any advantages.”

Damn, his excitement was quickly released.

“But it doesn’t matter. Since it’s like this, I can return the favour.”

When the arena was determined, the magic eye was so excited that its blood pressure immediately increased.

-Oh, as expected the warriors refuse to budge in this battle of nerves. However, it will be decided by who is stronger, not their words! So, begin!

“Go!” Bang bang double bang! The arena shook with loud vibrations. Pillars sprung up and the dark and massive ruins were created. Of course, the voice of the magic eye and the spectators couldn’t be heard any more from the interior. But those watching from outside the arena had no difficulties viewing the interior.

As soon as the match started, Shambala used Blink to reach Jewel.

“Huhuhu, this punk. Don’t be hasty. There’s no time limit so let’s do this slowly.”

Jewel laughed and scattered like fog as she flew to one side. It was the rare skill of the Dark Stalker that was only available in the darkness. It was Mist. The body changed into fog and it was a skill which increased speed and dramatically raised the evasion rate.

“Your opponent is me. The other guys don’t matter.”

“Ho oh, is this a 1 on 1 match? I have no reason to refuse. Warp!”

“Dark Wolf, I’ll leave Duke to you!”

Jewel used spatial movement magic to move Shambala to a different area. In order to use spatial magic, it required at least 7 circles of magic. It was barely even possible for magicians that used ‘Willpower exchange.’ The person who used such magic calmly was his opponent.

It meant that the lowest level possible was a level 160 magician. Additionally, what was even more important than the level was the type of magic used. Levels were insignificant to magicians.

‘When it is to that degree, it is impossible to guess whether Shambala would win or not.’

However, it wasn’t the time to be worried about Shambala. An arrow suddenly flew at him from the darkness.

‘Archer! Duke was an archer?’

Ark was surprised and avoided the attack by rolling his body.

‘As an opponent, archers aren’t that difficult!’

Ark stood up and held his position. After measuring the timing of Duke’s movements, he swung his sword like lightning. Riposte! The arrow returned to Duke at a faster speed than it had flown earlier. If he was good enough to enter the finals, then arrows of that degree were easily avoided. Ark expected

Duke to dodge the arrow, and aimed for the moment when he would dodge. Then Duke's lip stealthily raised.

"Nice move. Has your skill been trained to return this many arrows?"

Tu tu tu tung-!

Incredible rapid fire! Duke whipped out dozens of arrows and fired them at a dazzling speed. Ark managed to return 3~4 of the continuously firing arrows while the rest were flying at him. In a moment of carelessness, 1 arrow was driven into his shoulder.

"Ugh!"

-The arrow has caused a critical hit! 300 damage! Your attack speed will decrease by 10% for 30 seconds.

Even with his increased defense thanks to the dishes, he still received 300 damage.

The only penalty to long distance attacks was that the archer's attack speed was slow. However, Duke was faster than the sword. It couldn't be that high because of the archery skill level. He probably had various passive skills that would increase attack speed.

'He is also a pioneer.....!'

However, Ark just tediously tried to face the archer. Luckily, there was a weak point to rapid fire. The speed was so quick that accuracy fell. The arrows flew over 10 feet, and only some of them got within 1 foot of Ark.

'Then I don't have to be afraid of blind arrows!'

Ark stopped the arrows that reached him while using appropriate avoidance measures with the rest. And little by little he narrowed the distance between them using explosive acceleration. Duke realized and protested with an arrow! The chances of striking a critical hit was the timing.

'Got it!'

It was at that time. Suddenly light emerged from Duke's shoes and he slid back a few metres. Thanks to that, Ark attacked in vain and was hit in the side by an arrow shot by Duke.

‘Ugh, that, that was.....!’

“Kukukuk. Magic shoes of this calibre can't be seen anymore.”

‘Shoes? You mean that just now was an item effect?’

Ark looked at Duke's shoes with surprised eyes. The reason that an archer wasn't able to fight directly with a warrior was their stance. Warriors could wield a sword from any position. However, archers had to hold their position to draw the bow. Of course, it wasn't possible to do a proper attack when the warrior's sword was swinging at them.

However, Duke's shoes ignored that penalty. Gliding didn't move his feet, so he could still hold his stance and shoot while avoiding attacks. That's right. That was the scary point of the pioneers that Shambala pointed out straight away. While unusually high skills was a problem, the real worry was about their items. The pioneers had already hunted in the high-level areas in the early stages and selected all sorts of rare items. Duke smirked and shouted.

“The core of online gaming is the equipment.”

Ark ground his teeth together. Of course he knew. Equipment was very important to online gaming. But Ark believed that it wasn't everything. If equipment was everything, wouldn't that mean that a person who started late wouldn't ever be able to catch up with them? He didn't ever want to admit that. That was why he carefully raised his skills from the bottom up and never skipped exercising every day. No, equipment wasn't everything in New World!

“Damn, Dark Dance!”

It was the skill that significantly increased his evasion rate! Ark stepped on the red footprints that floated on the ground and disappeared like a ghost. At

the same time, Duke again used rapid fire. However, Ark swung his sword at all the arrows at an incredible pace. Duke began to look puzzled as his evasion movements continued.

Crunch, tu tu tu tung, bang, tu tu tu tung! Duke slid back with the magic shoes while using rapid fire. Ark moved like a ghost using Dark Dance and wielded his sword. He didn't even look up at the fighting magician that was randomly using warp.

He was able to understand the two locations using the sparkle of the sword and the arrow in the darkness. Naturally, Ark and Duke confirmed the opponents with their eyes and attacked. If he could intuitively grasp the path of the opponent, then he would be able to break through the barrage of attacks. And this was Ark's specialty.

“Ugh, this guy.”

Thanks to Dark Dance, Duke retreated with a groan. Ark attacked between arrows, so Duke was hit three or four times with the sword. However, Ark was the one confused. Even with the various dishes and a bunch of bonus darkness attribute stats, only 10% of Duke's health was decreased even though he was hit three or four times. Either his health was ridiculously high, or his armour with loaded with defensive stats. No, if he was a pioneer then both reasons were probably applicable. Still, he couldn't make any attacks with Dark Blade. But Ark soon braced himself.

‘If it's this much, then it is worth doing!’

“Hmm, a frontal confrontation is troublesome as expected. It's better to enjoy myself my way.”

Duke slipped around the corner and went into hiding. He was trying to use guerrilla warfare that the terrain was suited for. That was also Ark's specialty, but it was disadvantageous against an archer. If he was showered with arrows from a high place like a balcony, there was no way for he to avoid all of it.

“You must be quite concerned about me if you’re trying to leave.”

Ark turned the corner. However, the figure of Duke did not appear. It was a large square so no matter how fast he was, he wouldn’t have been able to hide himself in time. Then?

‘Don’t tell me that Duke can also use Stealth?’

Tu tu tu tung!

It was at that time. There was a mechanical sound and countless arrows started falling from the sky.

-You have activated the Poison Arrow trap. 300 damage received.<Thanks to the acid poison, your health will reduce by 10 every 20 seconds for 2 minutes.>

“Hu hu hu, have you finally noticed?””Tr-trap? If he can use stealth and traps then.....Ranger!”

His laughter was audible in the darkness. Learning stealth and archery, as well as tracking and using traps was one of the most difficult jobs in the archer profession, the Ranger! That was Duke’s real profession.

Once Duke showed the characteristics of his profession, Ark was immediately backed into a corner. Duke would hide himself with ‘Stealth’ and when Ark got stuck in a trap then he would shoot arrows before running away again. Yet Ark couldn’t follow blindly. That was because he would intentionally invite him into a trap. In the end, it wasn’t possible to do it in this state. But there’s even more. The weak point of ‘Stealth’ was that he couldn’t move without Ark hearing the sound. But since the sound of the shoes sliding were light, Duke couldn’t completely eliminate the sound of his footsteps. So Ark tried to capture the sound.....

Waeeeng!

-A Siren’s trap was activated.<Your ear has become paralyzed for 3 minutes and you can’t hear any sounds from your surroundings anymore.>

Duke overwhelmed Ark in terms of equipment, skills and every other way. Because the level was fixed to 100, the difference was shown even more. Ark's clothes became wet and he steadily losing health. He also didn't have an effective way to discover the traps. The traps that Duke used didn't simply do damage. There were also traps that could bind and stun. If would take falling into just one dangerous trap for him to be defeated. Duke was a pioneer and had already found a way to overcome the weakness of 'Stealth.'

'I should have done everything I could in the beginning.....I took it too lightly.'

Ark also had a bag of tricks. His poisonous pet snake. However, if was a huge burden for him to use so early so he didn't. It was a mistake. He should've used it early to make the opponent's health decrease even more. He missed the timing, and now the circumstances meant that he couldn't use it easily.

'If I summon my pets now then they won't be any help. Deimos can't avoid the traps, and Dedric was vulnerable to arrows so he would just receive damage instead. And there is no chance to attack with Snake's poison.....'

He was contemplating for a moment before something flashed in Ark's head.

'Pets, poison! Okay, maybe.....!'

"Snake, Paralysis!"

Once his health was reduced to 60%, Ark finally pulled out a trick from his bag.

Ark coated his sword with Snake's poison and walked to the corner where Duke had disappeared, sticking closely to the wall. Then while Deimos was summoned, he hid using 'Stealth.'

"Summon Demon, Deimos. I can only believe in your defense!"

Clack clack clack!

Deimos rushed forward vigorously. Duke had laid out a bunch of traps around the corner.

There was a large roaring sound before visually frightening dust flames and smoke began to spread. Deimos had advanced using his body as a shield. It worked for a while before Deimos was bound in a trap and targeted by arrows.

“Did that stupid guy give up?”

Duke appeared at that time. In the passage shrouded by thick smoke, Deimos was easily mistaken as Ark.

“It’s now. Dark Dance!”

Ark quickly rounded the corner and rushed at Duke. He poured a shower of kicks on him.

Duke who had been trying to shoot an arrow never expected the barrage of attacks. He confirmed that it was Deimos a step too late and tried to run away but Ark had barely managed to catch him. Ark used Dark Dance to move around Duke while kicking and swinging his sword. His sword was stained with paralysis poison and his kick could also cause abnormal conditions! Meanwhile, Deimos had also managed to escape from the trap and went behind him to block Duke’s attack.

‘I have to end it here!’

But Duke’s defense surpassed his imagination. Although he was attacked non-stop for 30 seconds, his health did not fall below 50%. But the paralysis condition was stacked up every time an attack hit and was also layered over with other abnormal conditions.

“Damn, this was expensive.....Warp trap!”

Duke installed a trap at his feet using quick hand movements. Then Duke

activated the trap and disappeared before appearing 10 metres away. The moment they were in a desperate situation, the pioneer's experience showed its power once again. The warp trap was a trap that allowed him to move to an area where another trap was laid out. The user could also use the traps as a combo on himself. It was a method of escaping that couldn't have been imagined by Ark.

'But his health is already at 40%. I am more advantageous!'

"I will not forgive you!"

Duke protested and pulled out a bunch of arrows that flashed. It was the magic arrows that cost 40 silvers for 1. In addition, it was level 140. It was a high level archery skill where the arrow would explode once it connected with something. When it was shot, a huge explosion immediately occurred in the area. Rocks fell down as flames rose from all sides.

Clack clack, clack clack clack!

Suddenly, Deimos pushed Ark out of the way at a desperate moment. He received all the falling rock and fire damage! He was a pet that overflowed with loyalty. However, Ark wasn't thankful for the loyalty shown.

-Your pet 'Deimos' had been recalled to the Netherworld. You have received 50% of the Familiar's Health as damage.

The problem was that thanks to evolving in the Underground World, Deimos had 1000 health so Ark received 500 damage. He had put all that effort into making Duke's health 40% and now Ark's health was also 40%. Deimos' health was low from the traps so he was forcefully recalled with that last attack.

"Ugh, this, this guy.....!"

Duke had already hidden his body using 'Stealth.'

"Hu hu hu, now your shield has disappeared entirely. Rest assured however. He's not the only one I will kill. I'll slowly crush you."

Duke's voice was heard in the darkness. When he used it, the skill was useful but if it was on the other side then it was an annoying skill.

'Damn, I didn't realise a ranger was this difficult.'

Since then, the same situation was repeated. When he moved to avoid traps, magic arrows would fly from behind him. If he tried to focus on the arrows then a trap would be triggered. After all of that, Ark's health fell to 20%.

-Shambala has used the 'Trill' skill on you. Would you like to accept?

'Shambala? Maybe he managed to defeat Jewel? '

Ark accepted Trill with an expectant look.

-Ark, what is your situation?

-Honestly, not very good. You? Did you perhaps defeat Jewel?

-.....Wrong.

-What?

-That Jewel is even stronger than before. I was trapped in the passages where she used magic I've never seen before. I've managed to reduce her health to 40% but I'm in a critical condition.

-.....Damn it! Are we going to lose to them after all?

Ark ground his teeth together. Even though it was a dark dungeon, it only acted as a penalty to them so far. This was because Jewel and Duke were also of the dark attribute. Even if they had the same dark attribute, their skills were entirely different. Ark and Shambala were close combat specialists. But they were professionals at 'hunting' with all the magic and traps. It was obvious that something like a maze of darkness would be beneficial for close combat and hunting.

-I'm sorry. I shouldn't have proposed an individual battle.

-.....

Ark was silent for a moment. Shambala was already half-way to giving up. However, Ark had no intention of giving up. If he gave up here, then all his efforts in the last six days would've been worthless. And Magaro's secret map that might show the location of huge amounts of money would be given to the unidentified merchants.

The merchants knew the value of the map so he wouldn't be able to obtain it with money or intimidation. Of course, there was still Ark's fight with Duke remaining. However, if Shambala was defeated by Jewel then it would be useless. If Shambala was defeated by Jewel then Ark wouldn't be able to handle her as well as Duke.

'If Shambala dies then everything is finished. But Shambala is in a different area. In order to defeat Jewel and Duke, we must join forces.....'

At that time, a thought flashed through Ark's head.

-Shambala, didn't we previously have a fight in this cave? It was made clear that the ruins were symmetrical. And there is only one pathway that joins both sides.

-So?

-That's it. Let's use it.

-Let's use it? How?

Shambala asked Ark who began to tell him the plan. Then Shambala thought for a while before replying.

-Certainly.....Yes, there is a possibility that it will work.

-We have no choice but to try it. We have to grasp the feeling, because timing is essential for this strategy. If one of us doesn't make it, or the timing is off by even 1 second then the whole thing will fail. Do you understand?

-I know. Then let's apply your strategy for the last match.

-Let's forward it to exactly 1 minute later, I'll see you there!

Once Ark disconnected the communication, he immediately triggered Adelaine's necklace.

It was a method of recovering mana in an emergency. However, this time Ark triggered the necklace for the 40% increase in defense option. With his defensive powers increased, Ark stepped on the traps that he had avoided previously. There was a ringing sound and Ark's body was tied to a tree trunk.

The Chain Trap was activated.<It isn't possible to move for 30 seconds.>

Once the trap worked, Duke immediately appeared and showered him in arrows. Even if he was chained up, he could still move his arm. Ark tried his best to hit all the arrows. However, his health quickly decreased from the rapid fire of the magic arrows. Even though his defense had increased by 40%, by the time the chains came loose he was in a critical condition."Ha ha ha, I finally caught you!"

"This bastard, you're planning to continue as a coward!"

Duke had immediately done a hit and run.

"Hu hu hu, what's the point of a frontal confrontation when you're already in a critical condition? It's nonsense. But did you just intentionally step on a trap? Kukukuk, how stupid! Do you think that I'm so stupid that I wouldn't notice you have something planned? Rangers have to be vigilant until the end. You should taste the hell of the traps again!"

"Even if I die, I'll bring you with me! Summon release, resummon Dedric!"

Ark had been waiting for his spiritual power to recover to 100%.

"Ugh!"

Dedric appeared with a scream. Ark had summoned Dedric to the stadium. Ark had originally summoned Dedric to gamble on the matches in the stadium. Because he was outside, there was no way to communicate with him. However, when he summoned him in an emergency then his former shape was shown. Dedric had looked like a little boy holding the hand of his father, therefore a young boy holding a megaphone appeared in the arena. In addition to that, he had a large piece of bread stuffed in his mouth. While his master was fighting and almost dying, he was just having a snack!

“M-master! A kind ajusshi gave this to me. Really. I would never use the money from the dividends to buy food.”

Dedric couldn’t even think of a good excuse. It was like a fish was left to a cat.

Since he had earned quite a lot gambling in the Evil Silrion.....

Ark couldn’t enter the gambling place as a participant. Therefore, he used Dedric as a smoke screen who ran around buying snacks with the money. Although he wanted to throw it away, now wasn’t the time.

“Shut up and pursue that fellow immediately!”

“Then, this never happened.....”

Damn, more time was being wasted thanks to his cheap tricks.

“I get it so hurry up before that guy gets away! If you lose him then you’ll die!”

“Allegiance! Hurray Master!”

Dedric turned into a bat and caught up with Duke. ‘Stealth’ couldn’t be used if someone was looking at them. That was the trump card that Ark came up with. When Duke couldn’t use ‘Stealth,’ he shot his arrows with a puzzled expression. But who was Dedric? In terms of his summons, he was the second in terms of combat ability!

“Heung, I’m not afraid of arrow! My master is more scary!”

Dedric used the pillars as shields and stared until his eyeballs popped out. Thanks to that, Duke couldn’t use ‘Stealth’ and had no choice but to be chased by Ark. After a while, Ark measured the time and gave an order to Dedric.

“Dedric, block the passage to the left and drive that guy towards the right passage!”

“Okay!”

Dedric blocked the left passage and shouted at Duke with a loud voice.

“Shrimp! I’m going to capture you and eat you!”

“Ugh, that annoying bat!”

But Duke held his ground and didn’t waste time arguing with Dedric. Ark was coming up behind him with a menacing expression. In fact, Ark was already in a critical condition. There was no reason for Duke to be afraid of him. However, the fact that Ark deliberately stepped into the trap made Duke feel anxious.

‘That guy, he definitely has something. Perhaps he has an item capable of recovery magic.....’

Eventually, the psychological warfare won and he turned his body and headed down the right passage. Then, he heard Shambala’s voice again through the use of Trill.

-Ark, I’m heading to that place!

-Okay. I’m also almost finished driving him there.

-Count it down. 3, 2, 1.....now! 6 o’clock at my back, 3 m above!

-Duke is at the front just around the corner!

Ark and Shambala shouted at the same time. Just before Duke turned the

corner, Shambala popped out from the rock. That's right. In the Pandemonium arena, the left and right side structures were the same. Shambala and Ark were battling on separate sides. And there was a corner where the 2 caves connected that was broken by a sharp angle. Ark and Shambala had worked out a strategy to aggressively swap partners there.

“What, what the? How did these guys.....?”

Duke was puzzled and lifted an eyebrow. However, after Shambala turned the corner he had already used a deadly skill.

“Torpedo Sword!”

The dagger sparked with lightning and a vortex was formed around the dagger as it rushed towards Duke. It was the hidden profession, Saint Assassin! The destructive power was enormous. Duke fell into the critical condition and he also had the ‘electric shock’ status. Of course, Ark wasn’t just watching. Taking advantage of Duke’s paralysis, Ark jumped and used his strongest skill.

“Take this, Blade Storm!”

Ark always had decent swords in a bag or two. It was in order to use Blade Storm at the last moment. As soon as Ark had pulled out a black sword from the bag, he used Blade Storm in the air. He was following Shambala’s directions of the target being 3 m up in the 6 o’clock direction!

Kwa ru ru rung!

The well-made sword was crushed to pieces and the fragments started to stir. At that moment, Jewel who was chasing Shambala appeared around the corner. Jewel was floating in the air with a translucent shield to protect herself. It was the protection magic which caused certain amounts of damage to become invalid. But the protective shield was quickly destroyed by the powerful offensive of Blade Storm. Jewel was surrounded by a vortex of shield fragments and was forced to the ground.

“Ugh, what on earth is this.....?”

Jewel still couldn’t grasp the situation.

“What is going on? You guys have become the targets!”

“Ugh, hell.....! You say that like it was a planned mission!”

“It is the end. Dark Blade!”

Ark ran up to Jewel and used Dark Blade.

“Damn, don’t look down on me, Warp!”

When a magician and warrior battle became close combat, the warrior would be superior because the magician’s magic would fail. The magician had to memorize a chant in order to use the magic. When the magic was invoked, it would appear in front of them and they would have to activate it. In dire situations, the magic reaction speed would naturally slow down and the magic would fail. The magician’s magic would fail without the right words. But that didn’t happen. Even when the situation was dire, Jewel was experienced enough to remember the chant and her warp succeeded. Jewel appeared 10 metres away using warp and immediately used mist magic to disappear.

“Dedric, after her!”

“There’s no need. Leave it to me, Ark. I’ll take care of it!”

Shambala shouted at Ark while he was wielding his sword. At the moment an amazing thing happened. The crowd couldn’t understand what it saw, or Ark.....and maybe even Shambala couldn’t imagine that such a perfect picture would be created. However, at the moment Ark understood Shambala completely and swung his sword at him. He didn’t intend to do it but it suddenly flashed and separated. Then. Although they had forgotten for a while, Ark and Shambala had a strange synergy with each other while fighting together.....this was because words couldn’t describe it.

“Riposte!”

Ark made his Riposte hit Shambala’s sword. The two swords clashing together caused sparks to fly! Ark’s counter struck Shambala’s chest. At the same time, the additional effect of Riposte kicked in. Shambala didn’t fight it and instead added to the pushing force, propelling him even more powerfully into the sky. He surprisingly flew 15 metres and struck with his dagger while using Torpedo Sword. A ray like lightning burned through the darkness. And Shambala penetrated Jewel’s body that fell to the ground. In her last moments, Jewel’s laughter came flowing out.

“Ah ah ah ak! U-unbelievable.....I.....I.....to guys like you!.....!”

It was like the reaction of a boss monster. Anyway, Jewel was surrounded by blue sparks and disappeared. Ark turned around and quickly looked at Duke.

“Ugh!”

Duke was barely out of the electric shock state and only had 1% health left. When Jewel had died in vain, he immediately lost his fighting spirit. Duke jumped up and tried to run away. Ark smiled and gave an order to Dedric.

“Dedric, how much have you piled up?”

“Ohuhuhuhu, tormenting weak guys are my specialty. Leave it to me! Dark Dash!”

Dedric flew like the wind and struck Duke in the head. Duke received the ‘Darkness’ status and struggled as he fell down.

“This guy! This guy! How dare you shoot an arrow at the my master that I respect? And you even sent Deimos back to the Netherworld? Then let me return the favour to you!”

Thus, the pioneer Duke was stepped on so much by Dedric that he died. Dedric who had controlled Duke trembled and reached out with both hands.

“Hehehe, Master. I handled the villain. Aren’t I pretty? Right?”

Dedric was really showing off. Shambala who was watching suddenly laughed.

“Kuk, hahaha, hahahaha. It really is fun fighting with you!”

Ark also let out a silly laugh. It was the toughest battle he ever had, and it was also the most exciting. When the two died, there was a ringing sound and Pandemonium suddenly disappeared. However, the crowd was so quiet that it was strange.

Then like a needle falling, a voice was heard.....

Like the crowd, the magic eye had been looking at the two of them with a bemused expression. Then like he suddenly woke up, the magic eye burst out with a loud noise.

-A, awesome! Blue Sword and Dark Wolf player! They were able to overcome the disadvantage in skills using strategies and the two opposing players were eventually defeated! It is this! The real beauty of the Evil Silrion arena! Ah, have you ever seen such a wonderful battle?Therefore, the winners of the 186th Pairs Tournament have been decided. With this tournament, he has the record of 49 straight matches, Blue Sword! And after his debut, Dark Wolf who made a shocking impact and won 12 straight matches.

Now the whole arena vibrated with shouts. Firecrackers burst in the night sky while the crowd stomped their feet and chanted Blue Sword and Dark Wolf. The users who bet on Jewel and Duke also generously cheered.”Wah ah ah!”

“That was more amazing than watching a real fight!”

“This fight was worth every penny, even if the admission fee was expensive!”

“The best. I had to watch that match no matter what!”

“Blue sword and Dark Wolf, this time you should become pros!”

“That’s right, you should play in more matches. I’ll get to see it every day!”

The stadium shook up and down.

Ark realized that 1,000 people had competed in this tournament and he had actually won.

## Frenzied Night

Ark and Shambala raised a hand to acknowledge the cheers and returned to the waiting room.

“It was quite fun.”

“The next match won’t be as fun.”

Shambala replied with a slightly stiff expression. Yes, they’ve won the tournament as planned. And in the next match, Shambala would be his opponent. In order to obtain the three clues, the two of them need to have one final battle. So far, they’ve decided to join hands and feet and fight together. That wasn’t a good thing at all. However, Shambala soon lost the tension in his face and laughed.

“Well, for the moment let’s just rejoice. We’ve managed to beat the pioneers in the Evil Silrion that many people couldn’t manage to do. We’ve earned the right to be happy.”

At that time, an administrative NPC came to the waiting room.

“Blue Sword and Dark Wolf. Can you come to the VIP room right now?”

“The VIP room?”

“Yes, an honoured guest is eager to meet the two of you.”

Ark and Shambala tilted their heads and followed the NPC to the VIP room. It was a nice room overlooking the arena and when they entered, an NPC with a chubby belly spread out his arms and welcomed them. The large number of jewellery hanging on his body shook and rattled carelessly.

“Ooh, come come! The great warriors that brightened the Evil Silrion. I’m Voltaire, the main person in charge of the Evil Silrion. I can see that your maturity is truly overflowing!”

“What can I do for you?”

Shambala asked in a brusque voice. Shambala acted quite different from the way he normally treated NPCs. Voltaire winced, but quickly smiled and nodded.

“Ha ha ha, the warrior is showing a well-suited arrogance. It’s okay, I understand. Because you showed skills that are a match for your arrogance.”

Ark hadn’t said anything but he was also treated like gold.

“I was quite impressed when watching your match, the way an ordinary foreigner managed to defeat the pioneers! It was quite boring to watch the pathetic warriors that would give up when fighting the pioneers. But you refuse to do that and faced each other beautifully. It was the first time I had seen such an admirable match. Thanks to that, the reputation of the Evil Silrion will increase even more.”

Voltaire praised them until the saliva in his mouth became dry.

“Did you call us just to say that?”

Shambala showed signs of annoyance. And Voltaire asked in a coy voice with astute eyes.

“Have you ever thought about becoming an exclusive gladiator?”

“Exclusive gladiator?”

“Yes. There are many special gladiators under contract with the Evil Silrion and sometimes they would hold special matches. Of course, the prize money and supplementary prize given to the gladiator exclusive matches cannot even be compared to the ordinary tournament prizes. There is also a separate pay that is given every month. Anyone who knows about the Evil Silrion would covet the job. How about it?”

Once he finished talking, there was a ringing sound and two message windows popped up.

[You have received the proposal to become an ‘Exclusive Gladiator’ from Voltaire, the moderator of the Evil Silrion.

In addition to their profession job, a player is also given an opportunity to choose a sub-occupation. You can receive a sub-profession from the senior NPC once you fulfil certain conditions. These sub-professions aren’t related to your main profession. When choosing a sub-profession, it is possible to learn exclusive skills. However, if you choose to leave the sub-profession and pick another one then the exclusive skills will disappear.]

## Become an Exclusive Gladiator in the Evil Silrion

Gladiators can be exclusively hired by the moderators of the Evil Silrion. Only warriors that display an excellent ability that charmed the crowd are able to choose this profession. If you become a gladiator, it is possible to receive many bonuses such as gladiator exclusive training facilities, stores and so on. They are also informed in advance of the schedule of all the tournaments as well as the prizes, and they are also automatically seeded and receive the right to start in the round of 16. There is also a monthly pay of 30 gold per month. A special bonus for special matches will also be paid. However, it is required to play at least one tournament per month.

Would you like to accept the offer of the sub-profession ‘Exclusive Gladiator?’

“I refuse.”

Shambala didn’t even have to think about it as he replied. Voltaire sighed in disappointment and looked at Ark. He could improve his skills and earn quite a lot of money in the Evil Silrion. The conditions that Voltaire suggested were also pretty good. Aside from the salary, the other rights were quite plausible as well. However, there was a part that was quite worrisome. The provision that he would have to play at least one tournament once a month. Didn’t that mean that he couldn’t leave the vicinity of Selebrid? New World was quite

wide and there were a number of things to do. Ark was too young (?) to sit in one place.

“I’m also not going to become an exclusive gladiator.”

At the end, Ark also politely declined. Voltaire lowered his shoulders and sighed.

“Valuable. With your capacity, the reputation of the gladiators in the Evil Silrion would certainly grow.....but I can’t force you. Alright. Instead, I just want to see the wonderful sight of you two again. Please participate in a tournament again when you get the chance. Can you promise that?”

“Thank you. Although I have to decline the proposal due to various circumstances, I won’t forget the fact that a popular noble like Voltaire-nim thinks so deeply of me.”

Ark smiled his business smile and gently answered. Voltaire fidgeted with his ring and laughed. Thanks to Shambala’s indifferent attitude, Ark’s kindness seemed to shine even more.

“Oh, your modest character is a wonderful thing. I would love to see thousands of warriors like you! Ah, I suddenly remembered. Although I only promised the original compensation to the winner. Thanks to you two, the Evil Silrion was unusually prosperous for the last couple of days. As a repayment for that, it isn’t so great but here is a little souvenir I’ve prepared.”

When Voltaire reached out his hand, an administration immediately handed over a box that contained a thick leather bracelet.

Gladiator’s Honour (Unique, Locked)

Armour type: Leather Bracelet

Defense power: 15

Durability: 60/60

Weight: 10

User restriction: Level 100 or more

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This is a symbol of honour that is given to gladiators that have fulfilled certain conditions in the Evil Silrion. It is a special compensation for the popular gladiators that have managed to draw a crowd of 10,000 spectators to the Evil Silrion. Although the Gladiator's bracelets are great, its value is more than just honour. Those who respect the honour of warriors will give you a lot of respect. The Gladiator's Honour will also have the name 'Ark' carved on the inside. This means that transferring the item to someone else is impossible.

In addition, there is no possibility of using magic or a scroll to break it.

<Option: Strength, Agility, Stamina +10, Fame +500, Sword-based Skill Growth +5%>

'U-unique bracelets! Recently, I've been quite lucky?'

It was an unexpectedly huge reward. That fact that Ark had gone through a lot of trouble in the Evil Silrion to only obtain one quest item had made him feel quite dissatisfied. But he never imagined that he would receive an item for mobilization a lot of spectators, not winning the tournament. In addition, it was a unique item!

The performance of the unique bracelet was enormous. It was rare that bracelets with a defense of 15 would also increase strength, stamina and agility by 10 points. But the first thing that caught his eye was the +5% of all sword-based skills option. Thanks to the 5% increase, it was possible to make his Sword-Hand Combat grow even faster. The only downside was that the item was character locked so it wasn't possible to sell it. But since it raised his Sword-Hand Combat growth, he wouldn't have wanted to sell it anyway. With the bracelet that he hunted in the Forest of Souls, he now had it

on both arms. However, he didn't want to sell the Amulet of Vitality. Last night, the power boosted by 5 was barely enough to save him. Although it couldn't compare to the warrior's honour, it was also a useful item. Ark looked at the Warrior's honour on his right arm.

'Hu hu hu, I managed to obtain two bracelets and shoulder plates from this.'

However, he felt that he was lacking more. When he put it on, he felt like wearing it on both wrists. However, one of the bracelets was Shambala's share.

'Sheesh, if it wasn't a locked item then I would try to obtain it somehow.....'

In front of items, friendship didn't matter to Ark.

"Starting from today, a weekly magazine published by the Evil Silrion will be sent to your mailbox for free. And the offer to become an exclusive gladiator is still open so if you ever change your mind, come and see me. I'll leave my door wide open for you!"

The NPC was offering quite a lot. Was it okay to receive the unique item and a free weekly newsletter? Furthermore, he could become an exclusive gladiator anytime he wanted to.

Ark sent 'Hu hu hu, my social life is going to be like this' with a look from his eyes. Then Shambala responded 'Do you want to live?' with his eyes.

"Well, take this and go. You can receive the victory cash prize and the supplementary prize at the management office."

Voltaire smiled and shook hands with only Ark. He was quite a narrow minded guy for someone with a large bulk. Anyway, they finally went to the management office to receive their compensation.

-You have won the 186th Pairs Tournament.

Current record: 12 wins

<Tournament Winner Bonus: Fame +300,  
Experience + 20,000>

-You have received the prize money of 200 gold for the 186th Pairs Tournament.

-The supplementary prize for the 186th Pairs Tournament is Magaro's secret map.

There was a side alley next to the Evil Silrion. The hooded merchants A, B, C gnashed their teeth furiously. They had spent 24 hours crying thanks to Jewel and Duke's blackmail. They weren't poor merchants, but nevertheless 1,500 gold was a lot of money. Most of their money was tied up in trade investments, so the only cash they could move was 1,050 gold. Then they had to desperately find an extra 450 gold in 24 hours.

‘We have to obtain it. This is a good investment!’

But it wasn't an easy task to find all that money. Eventually they had to sell off items piled up in warehouses for a much lower price than the market price. But they were still short 100 gold so they pledged their investments as collateral and borrowed money from high interest lenders. After all the blood and tears shed, they barely made 500 gold.....

“What the hell is this!”

Merchant A shook his fist and spat out curses.

“Those damn pioneers! They dared to bluff and raise the price only to fail! Those empty noisy cans! They should go to hell, those bastards!”

“We tried so hard to make the money that we even took out high interest

loans.....”

“Huk huk huk, now we’re going to die.”

The pioneers were beaten to death in the final match. Immediately after the fight, the pioneers vanished. Indeed, why would they face their partner unless forced? Thanks to those guys, they went through all that suffering to make money and now they vanished like chickens. While he was crying, Merchant C muttered with a concerned face.

“Sniff, Hyung-nim. What do we do now? We received damage and even racked up a huge debt, but now the final clue is in their hands.”

“.....There is no other way.”

Merchant A was locked in thought for a moment before he said in a deliberate voice. Merchant B and C swallowed their spit and avoided his gaze.

“Hyung-nim, by the way.....”

“Mercenaries, should we hire mercenaries?”

“We have no choice. We are merchants after all. We shouldn’t just resign ourselves to these damages. If possible, I didn’t want to use a fearsome or vicious method.....but, Blue Sword and Dark Wolf asked for it.”

“But they are the tournament winners. Don’t you think they’re very strong?”

“Yes but they are only two people. Even including their colleagues that we saw at the main entrance, it’s only a few people. In addition, the levels of those 10 people don’t seem that high.”

Yes, although Ark was well hidden they were already aware that Dark Wolf and Ark was the same person. After listening to Ark’s and Shambala’s conversation, they had secretly followed them back to the main gate.

“Yes Hyung-nim! You’ve even grasped such a thing!”

While Merchant B and C raised their voices, Merchant A just shrugged.

“Hu hu hu, I didn’t make it this far as a merchant without raising my insight. Anyway, if we hire 10 level 120 mercenaries then that should be enough to take care of them. No matter how good Blue Sword and Dark Wolf is, they wouldn’t be able to defeat those number of people.”

“Indeed. But our purpose isn’t to kill them but to retrieve the items.”

“Of course.”

Merchant A smiled and took out a few scrolls. Then Merchant B and C became frightened.

“H, Hyung-nim! That surely.....!”

“I see you’ve figured it out. Yes, this is the rumoured chaotic scrolls [Peek] and [Robbery]. It is a fearsome item that allows someone to peek into the target’s bag and steal one designated item from them. Most merchants are afraid of these scrolls but I’m different. In some cases, they should be used. I happened upon these scrolls a while ago and kept them.”

“Oh oh, what wonderful foresight!”

“Ohu hu hu hu, are you surprised? I’m surprised. Because the chaotic scrolls are still items that only merchants know information about. I’ve never dreamed that I would use these scrolls. Recently there was a hobbit merchant that was hanging around Selebrid selling these scrolls. Although the market price was a little bit high.....”

Merchant A smacked his lips and murmured.

“Even if it is Blue Sword and Dark Wolf, they won’t be able to stop the scrolls. When they die, they will be robbed and any extra items can be sold as extra profit. I don’t want to kill, but if they hang onto it then it is the last resort. When threatened with the scroll then they should hand over the items.”

“As expected of Hyung-nim!”

“But don’t we need plenty of money to hire 20 mercenaries level 12?”

“You don’t have to worry.”

Merchant A replied.

“Selebrid is overflowing with tons of unemployed people.”

Unfortunately, it was an undeniable fact. In Selebrid, there were many users over level 100. However even though their levels are high, not all of them lived affluent lives. No, higher level users that had a profession other than merchant tended to be poor. Even though their health was higher, they needed deluxe wheat bread to recover it and the repair price for equipment was also no joke. The users who couldn’t manage their finances were no different to beggars after their equipment completely breaks. Naturally, if they drank potions then hardships would only increase. That wasn’t the only reason they were poor. In Selebrid, gambling thrived thanks to the Evil Silrion. And the simple warriors were weak to such temptation. They would waste all their savings in a pub binge or find a casino with high inflation until they lost so much that they were forced to mortgage their equipment. It was to the extent that with no money and no equipment, the level 100 users couldn’t even go out hunting without dying. Probably, the rehabilitation group and Roco would end up in a similar situation. It was a miscalculation to think that a high level user would earn a lot of money like Ark. He had strict money management and would even run 1 kilometres to get an extra copper or go an extra 10 kilometres to cut the cost by 1 copper. Other users had no concept of such a method of saving. Anyway, the users that have become like beggars were desperate for jobs. A job where they would clearly be paid was even more of a blessing than hunting!

“Hire level 120 users but draw the line at 50 gold for 1 day.”

“But they might have to kill someone.”

“The final blow is limited to 2~3 people with the highest level. And when

they become chaotic and enter the prison, we will pay compensation for the penalty. We still have the 1,500 gold we promised to the pioneers.”

“Oh oh, it is a perfect plan!”

“Isn’t it? Hu hu hu, sometimes I’m afraid of the inside of my head as well.”

Merchant A rolled his eyes and said.

“Now, I don’t have the time. The fellow who obtains the clue can’t know that we are seeking treasure.

“I understand!”

Merchant B and C moved their short legs and disappeared into the alley.

“What now?”

At that time, Ark and Shambala faced unexpected problems. Ark and Shambala had won the Pairs Tournament so there was only one thing left to do. But before the decisive battle, they had to put the clues together first. However, Sid who had left at the beginning still hadn’t returned. He had sent a letter using the Magic Institute’s letterbox.

Ark-nim, this is taking longer than expected. You don’t have to be concerned because business is still fine.

That was the letter send to him from Sid. But there was no way to figure out why he was late from the contents of the letter.

“Maybe he forgot the items and had to return for it?”

However, Ark had no way to contact Sid straight away. Because Sid was a poor merchant so he didn’t have a transfer mailbox. Of course there was a way to send general mail, but general mail had to designate a village rather

than a person. However, Ark didn't even know the area that Sid was wandering around. An item was an item, but Sid was carrying thousands of gold so he was worried about him leaving behind schedule. But Ark shook his head.

'It would take a lot of time to organize the items and turn it into 5,500 gold. There are a number of significant items. Yes, my hyungs and I invested a lot of money, so even if it takes a long time, it is important to sell it at a suitable price.'

"What should we do Shambala? Sid doesn't seem to be returning for a while?"

Ark explained the truth to Shambala. Shambala looked thoughtful for a while before nodding.

"If you can't contact him then it's not possible. Since he also has to hold the items while conducting business. Then our fight will be postponed until Sid returns."

"I suppose. What else can we do?"

Ark nodded while looking at the secret map. In fact, Magaro's quest wouldn't be able to proceed even if Sid was back now. He never thought that there would be a restriction on the secret map.

#### [Magaro's Secret Map (Quest Starting Item)]

An old parchment with unknown letters and geometric symbols written on it. Although it shows tough terrain, it is difficult to guess the location just by looking at the map. It seems to require other clues in order to decipher the symbols and characters.

<Quest Progression Minimum Condition: One or more additional clues, Level 150 >]

'This is what Shannen means by the quest being difficult.'

Ark recalled Shannen's words. When he gave the quest, he added that it wouldn't be an easy one for Ark to complete. Although he didn't pay attention at the time, now it was a small hint. This was a virtual reality game, so naturally there would be a limit restriction on an NPC's request. If the minimum progression requirement for the quest was level 150, then if he had to guess then he would have to be level 160~180 before he could start it. However, Ark's current level was 127. Although his skills gained a lot of experience in the Evil Silrion, he could only raise his level by 4 in the Forest of Souls. In the end, he had to be 23 levels higher in order to continue the quest. Shambala's situation wasn't too different from Ark's.

“Shambala, what are you going to do?”

“Let's see.....”

“We can wait for Sid here, or I can gain 23 levels in some decent hunting grounds and meet up again later.”

“I'll consider the problem a little bit more. I still have a job to do in this area. But I don't know how long it will take.”

That was when someone started hitting the both of them.

“Hey, you've just won the martial arts tournament so why are you giving off a bad impression? I don't know what you guys are talking about but let me buy you a drink!”

Ark and Shambala jumped and turned around. He had turned off the transformation and Shambala had also changed his mask and cloak so they felt wary. However, Ark quickly solved the problem.

“JusticeMan ajusshi? How?”

“Ha ha ha, we heard that you were in the finals and ran here.”

“Oppa, I've come as well.”

Roco poked out her tongue and interrupted JusticeMan. But they weren't

alone. The rehabilitation group was also gathered. They were one of the groups cheering in the stadium while wearing a cap and holding megaphones along with Dedric.

“Ark, I saw the match.”

“Was it challenging? Also Shambala as well, they are indeed our younger siblings.”

“He he he, thanks to betting on you we earned quite a bit of money.”

“It was thrilling. To such an extent that we want to go and fight in a tournament right now.”

The anticipation caused Bul-kkun’s chest to rise as he took a deep breath.

And then Jjak-tung said in a gentle voice.

“Easy. We have more important things right now.”

“Eum, I know.”

“Yes? Something more important? Weren’t you looking for the thief, Hyung-nim?”

“We already found that guy.”

Jjak-tung smile subtly and looked at Ark.

“While solving that job, we ran into a bigger problem. Well, let’s talk about that one later. Because you’ll soon know anyway. Hu hu hu, these hyungs will probably see it again.”

“Now it is time for alcohol! You won so of course you have to drink alcohol! Come on, Ark!”

His expression became light as he shouted. New World was so realistic that they could even get drunk in the game. Because it isn’t real liquor, it would break up over time but while they were drinking it would feel like the real thing. That was the main reason the taverns in New World were always

busy. People could get drunk comfortably while drinking but there would be no hangovers. If someone drank then they would get the drunk ‘condition.’ In addition, the tavern atmosphere was quaint. The alcohol tasted good and sometimes a good looking minstrel would sing. Where else could a drinker find a better environment? Thanks to that, they would often dine in the taverns in New World. The rehabilitation company was also very fond of the liquor in New World. However, Ark didn’t like drinking that much. He couldn’t understand why people would spend a lot of money on drinks.

“No, I’m a little weak to alcohol.....”

Ark tried to refuse the drinking party. Then he became frightened as the rehabilitation group surrounded Ark.

“Ark, you aren’t trying to say that you don’t like alcohol are you?”

“Hey, your character must be really dull.”

“Please speak clearly. Do you want to drink alcohol or break off our relationship?”

“Yes? Yes? But what.....?”

Ark was confused as the attitudes of the rehabilitation group suddenly changed. However, the rehabilitation group was serious. The atmosphere seemed like it would become really serious if he refused.

“I’ll take some. I’ll drink.”

“That’s it! Ark, you’re a man as expected!”

The rehabilitation members clenched their fists firmly and cheered. Then they looked pathetically at Roco and said.

“He he he, Roco. Drinks with Ark. Because it is a celebration party. It would be worthless not to drink today, yes?”

“Ugh, really.....I understand. But only for today. In the future there will be no broth.”

“Wow, that’s it! Drinks today!”

The rehabilitation members danced joyfully before grabbing Ark and Shambala and running to the tavern. The rehabilitation members couldn’t drink the favourite drinks for several days. Of course, it was because the dictator Roco was clutching the money tightly. So the rehabilitation members had been waiting for today with bloodshot eyes. They were convinced that Roco was likely to open the wallet strings for Ark’s celebration party. And their guess was right.

“At any rate, I couldn’t stop them.”

Roco checked the wallet and sighed. However, it was for Ark. She was willing to spend money for him.

“For the champions!”

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation company lifted their glass with a happy expression. Although it had been a long time since he went to a tavern, he could hear a sound every time he drank. The reason was simple. Every time Ark drank alcohol, it was impossible to tell that Roco was accepting something from Ark underneath the table.

“Sheesh, I never thought that you would be the champion first.”

“Well, I only say the final match but it was wonderful. The audience was also hanging on to every move.”

“Yes, we contributed quite a lot to the pot for you in the final game. Because Roco was gambling, everyone bet to the upper limit.”

“Tonight we’ll drink until we’re satisfied!”

“Hey, bring 30 cups of beer here! When will the pork barbecue come out?”

If the rehabilitation group had a chance, they would drink away the whole bar. Nevertheless as the rehabilitation group had difficult pasts, their standards were different. There was yelling across the bar and some people were even getting up on the tables to dance. It was to the extent that someone could feel drunk from the atmosphere. When they started drinking, their behaviour when drunk immediately showed. When he became drunk, Jjak-tung’s attitude went through a 189 degree change.

“Hey, Ark.....Hiccup. You mean.....you know that we love? He he he, I’m really desirable. However, that.....don’t do it.....what.....it’s Roco. Eh, taken. What was I saying? Oh, so.....Because I think I do like you?”

Jjak-tung clung onto Ark and kept on repeating the same words. The bar was a part time career that was quite a tough opponent for Ark. Shambala was the only one that remained sullenly unchanged. Shambala was staring at a 1000 CC mug of beer on the table.

“Now, time for a one-shot again.”

When Bul-kkun emptied the beer mug, Shambala just glared silently at the empty mug. Shambala had a strong fighting spirit and rose to the provocation as he emptied a mug of 5,000 CC beer.

“Hu hu hu, you, do you like it? Let’s see who will give up first.”

“Drink! Drink! Drink!”

The rehabilitation members surrounding the two of them cheering while knocking on the table. Fortunately, the rehabilitation members didn’t talk about Roco becoming the leader.

“Hah, why is it noisy? Excuse me.”

“He he he, it’s okay. Isn’t a tavern the place where you drink and make

noise?”

The tavern owner generously laughed and replied. However even if the NPC didn't mind, it weighed on Roco's mind as she took the tray.

“Give me that. I'll take it.”

It was at that time that a problem occurred. When she carried the tray, in the eyes of the users Roco's form became visible along with the NPC. A company of users froze and smirked as they noticed her.

“Hey, pretty lady?”

“Why don't you sit here and I'll give you some tips on drinking?”

“What?”

When Roco raised an eyebrow, the boys giggled.

“Ho oh, why do you look even more attractive when you're angry?”

“A woman that prickly would have more passion at night.”

“Hu hu hu, the director knows a bit about women.”

If you go to a bar then there are humans just like this one. The humans which would unnecessarily tease a woman. New world was a place where many types of people gathered. But today they picked the wrong opponent. The atmosphere of the rehabilitation group that was laughing instantly became chilly.

“Hey, you. What did you say just now?”

They lowered their glasses angrily. It wasn't enough. JusticeMan, Hae Gyeolsa, Yapsab and even Jjak-tung stood up and glared at them. Although they lived a new life, they were rehabilitated children of the darkness. Even though they were in a game, their bloodthirsty impression was no joke. The director of the group of men stuttered.

“What, what the. Who are you? A gang?”

“Say one more word if you want to go scuba diving into cement off the coast of Incheon.”

“I don’t know what you are but do you know who I am?”

“You’ve just decided your fate with your answer. As fish food.”

The guy flinched away frightened from their rage. However, it was a slow game. The users drinking alcohol in Selebrid were quite high level. Furthermore, the company numbered 10 people. Anyway, thanks to the rehabilitation members the atmosphere had become quite tense. However, the tavern owner just looked at it with a pained expression. Although he wanted to intervene, he didn’t have the courage. However, his salvation was soon offered from an unexpected place.

“Oppas, please have some moderation!”

Roco banged on the rehabilitation group’s table who instantly became like rabbits.

What is this? You’re adults with advanced capabilities! Do you know how unsightly it is to start a fight in a bar? You also made the owner nervous.”

“Eh? W-we just.....”

“That’s enough. Don’t prolong it.”

Roco turned to JusticeMan who cleared his throat.

“Hmm hmm, yes, Roco is right. Well, the tavern isn’t the place for this. Let’s just drink.”

In the end, the rehabilitation members sat dejectedly in their seats. And the other company started chatting with tense faces.

“Sheesh, what the? They started trembling just because of a girl.”

“Right. It is unexpected for fellows that look like that.”

“Anyway, that is the problem these days. Those sort of guys just run wild.

They would probably be forced into the corner of a room when playing a game. Those fools, the only ones that would probably understand them for the rest of their lives are their parents.”

“Just by looking at them, I can tell that they’re the type to play roughly.”

“They probably haven’t even stepped through the threshold of a university.”

“They’re probably punks or delinquents.”

Every time the guys in the company spoke, an angry vein would throb on the foreheads of the rehabilitation members. They were sticking pins into the painful parts of the rehabilitation members. Roco also felt the same.

However, Roco ground her teeth and shook her head.

“It’s okay. Oppa, don’t bother with them.”

“Kyaak, what are you doing?”

Suddenly a sharp scream could be heard from one side of the tavern. The eyes of the rehabilitation group immediately looked over there. There are several female users over there chatting. Then one of the guys from the company went over there and stroked a body. Jjak-tung’s eyes flashed as he immediately grasped the situation.

“A lady is in a crisis!”

“If you’re a true South Korean man then you can’t enough such a thing!”

Bul-kkun stood up with a happy face. That’s when Roco suddenly banged the table. They jumped and turned to see Roco staring angrily at them before she said.

“Those uncles, get them!”

That was enough to sort out the whole situation. The rehabilitation members shouted with joy before rushing towards the company of men. In fact, Ark had also been annoyed by their words earlier. Since he knew how the rehabilitation members’ lives used to be, Ark couldn’t forgive them for those

words.

“Dark blade!”

Ark made a scene as he jumped over the table and used his special move. The director of the company screamed and rolled onto the ground. As he cursed and tried to pull out his sword, JusticeMan grabbed his throat and threw him. The company was definitely higher level than them. However, when it was a fight in a bar they were no match for the rehabilitation members. They were also attacked by surprise so they couldn't get their swords out in time. After a few moments, they were all stretched out bruised on the ground. Then the guy that was the director shouted.

“Th-these guys! This is Selebrid! Do you think you'll get away with killing us?”

That's a problem. A grey name was quickly restored but if they became chaotic then it was a much larger problem. It was at that time. Shambala sat up and murmured in a sleepy voice.

“Death's Agent.....”

Death's Agent! It was the special skill of the Saint Assassin where they received permission for certain actions from the Death God, so even if he killed someone then he wouldn't become chaotic! Shambala looked at the ceiling while idling watching the director shout.

“I don't like these guys either. Ark, tell the hyungs to surround these guys. If others see then it would become difficult.”

Ark and the rehabilitation members laughed as they turned and made a wall. That was because Death's Agent would be ineffective if seen by other NPCs or users. Soon, an awful ringing sound was heard and the guys became corpses. After Shambala took care of it, the rehabilitation members went back to eating and drinking like nothing had happened. After a while, the tavern owner approached with an appetizers.

“That lady bought these for you.”

“Eh?

The rehabilitation members looked over in surprise and saw the female user wink.

“You were cool, scary ajusshi.”

“L-lady.”

Bul-kkun trembled and muttered.

“I.....New world is very good.”

Roco also felt pretty good and laughed as she said.

“Okay. Since the noisy ajusshi is in this state, let’s drink all night.”

“Oh oh oh, all night!”

“Yes! Roco!”

The rehabilitation members shouted and began to enthusiastically order alcohol. Ark was confused at the change in Roco that he never imagined. Then Roco stumbled as she moved back into place. Ark quickly caught her before she fell and held Roco’s head.

“Hehehe, Ark oppa.....today you were pretty cool.”

He could quickly smell the alcohol coming from her.

“Roco, how much alcohol did you drink?”

“Drink, I drank one earlier because I was upset about those guys ooooh.”

Roco’s tongue curled as she answered.

“Oppa, oppa, listen when I talk. Do you remember the guy at work I told you about before? That guy started teasing me again yesterday. I really dislike those kind of people. So I slapped him on the cheek. Hehehe, I did well right? If oppa saw me off every day then that wouldn’t happen.....and I’ll get to

see oppa every day.....Roco is sad.”

From the side, Shambala looked at Ark with sympathetic eyes.

“What a flashy brother, able to put her to sleep with one word.....Ark, I can roughly see your future.”

“Damn, noisy,”

At that time, the noise from the drinking party inside the tavern was at its peak. The still in debt Merchants A, B and C were still on the corner of an alley, shivering from the cold wind. Just like reality, New World also had pretty cold nights.

“Ooh, Hyung-nim. It is cold.”

Merchant C murmured with a tearful voice.

“Please hang in there. We don’t know if they will go to another place. There must be eyes on them at all times.”

“B-but.....cold.....cough!”

“Damn, wouldn’t those guys be drunk and happy by now?”

Merchant B glared at the tavern.

“Huk, while we had to live on wheat bread to hire the mercenaries.....”

Merchant C was close to tears as he chewed on a wheat bread.

“Don’t cry. Stop crying!”

Merchant A started to become angry. But he was the leader so he clenched his fist firmly with a resolute face.

“Although we are cold and hungry, in the end we will be the final winner. At

the end of the quest, we will rent out an entire tavern and idle for many days. Then we can laugh freely at those guys. Okay? So for now just endure it. Although it is difficult, endure it.”

“Whimper, yes, Hyung-nim. But it is too cold.”

“My younger brothers. I’m sorry.”

“You don’t have to be. It’s not Hyung-nim’s fault!”

“That’s right. Those guys are the bad ones!”

“Younger brothers!”

Hyung-nim!”

As the icy winds blew through a dark alley, it looked like Merchants A, B and C was re-enacting a drama. And in another alley, two pairs of eyes were also looking at the tavern.

“I found those guys. I’ll report it to the top.”

The masked man disappearing into the darkness was stamped with a red palm.

## I'm a fan!

“Alan, is this really the way to do it?”

Andel yelled in an angry voice. Alan sighed in frustration.

“How many times do I have to say it? Now is not the time for me to do anything.”

“It's not? What were you doing while I was in Cairo? I received the dog treatment. You know? The dog treatment, a dog! Ark treated me like that! That's what I'm saying. If I try to fight him, then I would just be stepped on again. They just carelessly talked in front of me like my presence was nothing!”

.....This was around the one hundredth time that he had heard it. Andel gradually became more fired up and spat our saliva as he talked wildly.

“Do you thing I would casually accept such a thing? No, do you think that I would forget my promises of revenge?”

Alan had no interest in what Andel was saying. It was Andel that had a debt to clear with Ark, not Alan. If he thought about it closely, there was no reason for him to get revenge on Ark. He was just a nuisance to his eyes. But it seemed like he was becoming an obstacle. Since he hadn't received any decisive damage from Ark yet, it was just a gut feeling. If so, he would like to get rid of him as soon as possible. Ark had become a hated guy for no reason. But he lacked the motivation to chase him and postponed it for other important matters. At that moment, Andel was gnashing his teeth beside him. Alan would have to coax him in order to properly handle this annoying guy. It was only just that. However.....

‘Honestly, I find you more annoying than Ark right now.’

Alan became irritated and gave a sharp sidelong glance towards

Andel. Although Nagaran was peaceful today, he couldn't guarantee what the battlefield would be like tomorrow. This time there were 12 castles opened in Nagaran. Thousands of users from the Schudenberg Kingdom, Sinius Principality and Bristania Kingdom flocked to Nagaran, but the number of guilds was only in the hundreds. Of course, they rushed into a prolonged war.

'If I occupy the throne carelessly, there will be a concentrated attack from the guilds that were watching for an opportunity.'

Indeed, at the beginning someone carelessly took the throne and after 30 minutes of a concentrated attack, all the members were exterminated.

Therefore, it became an achievement to even capture a castle in Nagaran. He noticed that most of the guilds in the same situation studied each other. They would then increase the supporters using secret dealings and one of the guilds would be expanded, and this would be repeated. Intrigue and betrayal! It's standard was bloodier than reality because of the enormous profit concerned. But those skirmishes were also coming to an end. They either submitted to the power of another guild or they would join forces and begin earnestly building up their power to occupy a castle. And they also prepared a plan to keep the castle for a long time once they've occupied it. Of course, 'Dawn Blade' led by Alan was one of the main forces. The time for the decisive battle of Nagaran was about to begin!

'All the necessary preparations are finished. Now all that's left is the timing. Victory or defeat will be decided by when I move.'

The place Alan was targeting was Silvana in the southern part.

'Among the 4 properties in the south, Silvana has the best location. The distance between the three kingdoms is short and it is also next to a beach, making it a good place to develop trade. When it becomes stable, Nagaran would definitely be the centre of trade in New World. If I can develop Silvana well then 'Dawn Blade' will definitely be the strongest guild!'

Alan prepared for it without hesitation. And when he was trying to march to

Silvana to occupy it, that was when Andel visited.

‘He is a guy that doesn’t think.....!’

Andel just acted without thinking. There were several reasons that Alan had brought forces to Nagaran within a short time. Alan was smart. He was able to grasp situations quicker than other people and if there was friction with the other allied forces, he would either placate them or get rid of them. His covert support for growth was also useful. The Cathedral’s bishop would conveniently receive a share of Silvana’s profit if Alan occupied it in return for some covert help. The cathedral has sent 20 mercenaries to support ‘Dawn Blade.’ They also ensured that they were provided with a large amount of ammunition. However, the most influential factor in expansion was none other than his reputation. Alan was recognized as the Holy Knight! It was the storybook image of someone who hated injustice and would righteously pursue justice! That public image was surprisingly important. It could possibly be compared against the analogy of the Three Kingdoms? The same applies to New World. The image of Alan had been crafted so carefully that it had a large impact when placating other guilds. Some guilds even approached him intentionally to form an alliance.

‘The most important thing to me is my righteous image.’

What would happen if it was known that Alan had hired assassins to take care of Ark?

.....It would likely spread and become a serious problem. That was why Alan couldn’t blindly get rid of Andel.

‘Andel right now is in a poisonous state. I don’t want to say something cruel and make it even worse. But with the mobilization of Dawn Blade, Andel might not have any time to go look for Ark.....his head is like a pebble. How do I explain it to him so that he understands how important it is? Nevertheless, my plan doesn’t work with this guy.’

Eventually, Alan headed out with Andel to where the ammunition was being procured. In the time it took to receive the military supplies, he tried to see if he could coax Andel. However, no matter the persuasion Andel was unshakable and refused to give up on catching Ark.

“That Ark is already over level 100. In addition, they seemed to have made a lot of money before leaving Cairo. Are you just going to leave them alone?”

“I told you. The Dark Brother organization now has a hostile relationship with Ark. Even if we don’t do anything, they won’t leave him alone.”

“You don’t understand at all. Even if the Dark Brothers kill Ark dozens of times, if he quits the game then I won’t get my revenge. I won’t be satisfied until I beat him with my own hands!”

“Of course Ark requires direct handling. But right now there is more important matters.”

“Important? Ha! What is more important? Isn’t occupying a castle a game as well? What on earth should I understand. Yes, it’s just a game. Why are you so invested in this game? Isn’t it more important to step on that guy? Isn’t it?”

“.....”

He let out a sigh. He’s not a child so what do should he say to make him understand? It was to the extent that he thought it would be easier to sit an ogre down and persuade it than Andel. When Alan turned his head, Andel immediately closed his mouth. The carriage carrying the two of them had finally arrived at the border of Nagaran.

“Eh? T-that guy.....!”

Andel swelled up like a ball and stuttered. As the carriage approached the border, the form of a hobbit merchant was seen humming and approaching. A smile spread on Andel’s mouth.

“That is the merchant that was in Cairo with Ark!”

“Hyu.....!”

Sid was sweating as he looked up at the clear blue sky. He had walked non-stop for the first few hours on a steep mountain path. He was using a carriage but it wasn't an easy task. But the idea that it was difficult didn't hold at all.

“Hu hu hu hu.”

Rather, whenever a heavy feeling appeared in the storage compartment then he would just laugh.

“This is what I have been wanting to do since I first came here.....”

When he arrived at the border of Nagaran, he had experienced some deep emotions. One week had passed and the hours seemed long when it was short, or short when it was long. However, Sid was a merchant so it was evident what was the most rewarding time for him. After all, warriors and merchants were different. Discovering unexplored dungeons and fighting a boss monster before finding a legendary item deep underground. That was every warrior's fantasy. But a merchant's dream was finding a new trade route and making a large profit from it! During the week he headed towards Nagaran, Sid had such a dream.

‘War is money!’

That was an undeniable law. In Nagaran there would be a bloody war between guilds! It was the best place for selling the various scrolls he bought from Cairo. But despair was waiting for Sid when he arrived at Nagaran. Nagaran was declared a war area. In other words, even if a user killed someone they wouldn't become chaotic. It was a very dangerous thing

in a sense. Users could be killed without penalty. Unlike the [Robbery] scroll with was used to steal an item, the aims of the Kings of the Three Kingdoms was different and they intended for Nagaran to be a simple lawless area. No, that was certainly the case. Because of that, there were signposts at the Nagaran border to prevent people walking in without knowing. The kings of the Schudenberg, Bristania and Sinius Principality also forbid any scrolls form being used. If they used a scroll then it would be considered a rebellion against the royal families of the Three Kingdoms. Sid's mood became dark. The ratio of scrolls within his 7 bags was 90%.

'Ark-nim is expecting a profit of more than 50%.....'

If it wasn't possible to use scrolls inside Nagaran, then it wouldn't be possible to receive a fair price for them. No, he didn't even know if he could sell them.

'Ark-nim will kill me if I return after selling it for 60~70% of the listed price!'

Sid knew and was terrified of how obsessed Ark was with money. If he returned the 5,500 gold investment with a loss, then Sid would really be made to drink soup.

'If Ark was in this situation, what would he do?'

Ark was a warrior, yet he earned more money than Sid. Even when the assassins forced him to fall into the hell, he was still obsessed with making money off the japtem. He would never give up in any situation where it was possible to make money. Sid was the only user who closely watched Ark's obsession with making money.

'If it was Ark-nim then he would never give up! On the contrary, he would somehow use this situation to make even more money. Yes, that's it!'

When he finished thinking, an idea popped in Sid's head. <Episode II: Pioneering age of the Foreigners> had started.

The changes occurring in New World was not just Nagaran opening to the public. So far, only a handful of users had been able to qualify to travel between the borders open to everyone! However, the best way to move was Nagaran which had become a war zone. Even when Nagaran became stable, users had to move through a steep mountain path. In this situation, it was inevitable that problems would occur. Thus, in peacetime it would immediately become less desirable. Sid carried the luggage and immediately went to the villages near the border. The main customers for him were suspicious looking warriors. The chaotic scrolls could be sold to them for 100% of the market price. The reason was clear. In the absence of peace at the border, they would use the scrolls to try and rob the merchants crossing the border.

‘Hu hu hu hu, this is it!’

Sid began to catch the feeling. When the scrolls were sold, Sid immediately left to an adjoining village. It was easy to sell hundreds of robbery scrolls. Of course, the security in the region was at the worst case scenario. It was a state where merchants would be immediately fearful, with rumours of thieves waiting to rob them on the mountain paths. His customers were also those merchants. It was a rule that a place that sold knives would also sell shields. Cairo also had items that could stop various chaotic scrolls.

“A standard item to escape from a crisis! The [Warp] scroll. You can hire mercenaries confidently with [Sword of Truth], protect yourself from [Robbery] and [Seize] using the [Bag Protection] or [Equipment Protection] scrolls. From the [Elimination] scroll which removes one scroll effect, there is a bulk sale on all items for a safe trade route. Please use Sid’s stalls.”

Immediately merchants flocked like clouds.

“How much for a [Warp] scroll?”

“45 gold. If you buy it in a set of 10, I’ll will discount 10 gold.”

“Yes? Isn’t that 110% of the price in a store? If I buy it from the store, I can also get a discount of 30%.....”

“I went through a lot of risk to bring the scrolls from Cairo to here. I met with bandits along the way quite a few times. Since it is like that, I’m selling it for 110% of the price.

“But, it is 45 gold for one scroll.....”

“If you don’t have the cash right now then I also accept various potions. But the potions have to be 80% of the listed price. Because I can sell it again for a profit. As a merchant you should understand?”

One merchant to the side poked another one and whispered.

“There’s not much time left on the due date for trading. If a thief robs us then the quest will fail and we will lose a lot of credibility.”

“Hyu.....I understand. 2 [Sword of Truth] and 2 [Warp] scrolls please.”

“Yep, here you go! Have a safe trip!”

Sid aimed for this. A merchant would understand the mindset of other merchants. After the borders were opened, many merchants received quests to transport exotic goods. But in order to complete the quest within a certain period, they had to cross the border.

‘Hu hu hu, I’ve learned this by following after Ark-nim.’

If they were going to spend money, once he has hooked them then he had to squeeze as much as possible out of them. When selling a missile to one side, he should turn right around and sell a missile defense system to the other side. Did it matter what kind of business it was as long as he made a profit? He had to do this if he wanted to engage in business. By selling a lot of knives, the price of the shields would jump up even more. Because of him, there were a lot of merchants who received damage. Sid’s life was tied up in this trade route. It wasn’t possible for him to look at other people’s

circumstances when he was worried about eating the soup made from Ark's pot.

'I didn't understand the world at all until now.'

So another unsuspecting merchant entered the path of darkness. No matter how much he wanted to keep sell the scrolls, timing was important in this business. Other merchants who smelled money would soon flock to the border with the scrolls. A market price slump for the scrolls was inevitable!

'When it becomes less profitable, I will shake it off and leave. It is Ark-nim's iron-set law.'

Ark had suddenly become a textbook. He bought items in Cairo at 60% of its price and now he was selling it at 100~110% of its price. Of course his experience and skill proficiency, as well as his income increased tremendously. Once the business became successful, Sid began to think even more. If he took advantage of the timing then it was possible to make even more profit! Sid determined that expensive potions and tool boxes were worth investing in so he bought some without any hesitation. Once the scrolls were exchanged for consumables, the amount was enormous. He also spent a fortune on hiring NPC mercenaries and returned to the carriage. That was also a part of his calculations.

'After Nagaran was opened, it became a public combat war. Since large amounts of guilds are in this area they require various potions and consumables, especially over time. It is a war of attrition. However, the winner is not determined by how much money they spend in a short amount of time. But if they did want to replenish supplies in the field, they would have to go all the way back to Selebrid.....I'm going to sell supplies near the entrance to Nagaran so even if it is a little bit expensive, it would save them time! Before other merchants attract them, I have to detain the customers!'

Sid was increasingly aware of his responsibility as a businessman. But since

scrolls couldn't be used in Nagaran, there was no security so if he died then he would lose items.

'Since PK is allowed in Nagaran, this business is dangerous. PK is fun for the people that exploit it. If I die to such people and lose even one item.....'

Soup. Sid shuddered as a chill crawled up his spine.

'Even if the profit was a little bit less, it is safer to set up trade at the entrance.'

Therefore Sid arrived at the entrance to Nagaran. He arrived just as a carriage containing a warrior was leaving to go buy supplies and decided to approach Sid.

"Are you a merchant? If you have any recovery potions or repair boxes can I order them in bulk?"

Sid looked the warrior up and down. Once he saw the equipment it wasn't a joke. The shine of money was clearly visible! Sid clasped his hands together as he kept up a business smile.

"Yes, of course. Not only recovery potions but I also have many potions that would increase the stats. Because you're my first customer, I'll give you an excellent price. However, it's still a little bit higher than the fixed store price.....He he he, you understand right?"

Sid spread out catalogues showing the products available. The warrior asked with a surprised look.

"That's an amazing amount. Do you own such a big business by yourself?"

"He he he, 90% of it is the capital entrusted by other people."

Sid had a big mouth. There was a subtle smile on the mouth of the warrior.

"So it is like that. It works out just fine. Since the large guild competition is about to start there is no time to go to Selebrid, so it is lucky that I managed to meet a merchant with so many goods. If you don't mind 110% of the fixed

price, I'd like to buy all your potions and repair boxes.”

“Yes? Yes? 110% of the fixed store price?”

He calculated the astronomical amount on a calculator.

‘Finally.....I finally have an opportunity for a colossal deal.....!’

Although merchants made the same amount of profit through many small deals, if they accomplish one huge deal then they would earn more fame and experience. If he sold items worth thousands of gold in one transaction then he couldn't even imagine the experience he would get! Sid's eyes stared at the warrior on the horse. The warrior smiled and said.

“However, our situation is that we can't receive the items at the moment. So let's set a time and date to receive the items. Because we have to prepare the gold as well. Please deliver the promised goods to this place tomorrow morning.”

The warrior opened his map and designated one section. Sid flinched as he looked at the map. Although it wasn't far, the area was in Nagaran.

“Is that a problem?”

“Yes? Oh, no. But.....”

“I know what you're worried about. But these days the outskirts are empty as most of the users have flocked to the area around the castles. While coming here I didn't even see 1 user.”

“I understand. I'll deliver it to the appointed place.”

Sid eventually accepted the offer. Although he was a little anxious, the number was too large for him to miss out on. The warrior nodded with a pleased face.

“If you're able to provide this huge amount of supplies then you must be a rich merchant. If you're managing the funds of other people then you must be quite reliable as well. It is fortunate that I met someone like Sid at the

entrance to Nagaran. I was looking for reliable merchants. If it becomes necessary in the future, how about a long term deal? It might be more difficult but there would be no risk and we'll pay for all the trouble."

"I-I thank you."

"I'm glad to hear it. Then should we create the contract?"

"Yes, of course. But what is your name....."

"Alan, I'm Alan the leader of the Dawn Blade guild."

The warrior.....Alan grinned and replied. Sid who didn't participate in the event quest had never seen Alan.

The day after Ark's companions had a wild night.....in reality it was only 4 hours later. The sunlight spilled through the dim window of the tavern. Although JusticeMan liked drinking all liquor, his didn't enjoy drinking to death. However after Roco's words in the middle, they couldn't stop and began drinking even more furiously. Fortunately after chatting outside for 1 hour, the chilly wind helped dissipate the alcohol. Roco's face contained one expression that they knew well.

"Now are you going to go to the Evil Silrion?"

"No, it has been postponed for the moment."

"Yes? We've also found the big brother that we were looking for."

"Then it's official."

JusticeMan tried to say something else before laughing.

"Okay, do you know what you're going to do?"

“No. Right now.....”

“That’s great. Then briefly come with me. I’ve got something to show you. I wanted to discuss it with you.”

“Show me what?”

Ark tilted his head to the side while Jjak-tung interrupted with a smirk.

“Hu hu hu, the achievement we accomplished in the meanwhile. While you were winning, we weren’t just playing around.”

“Achievement?”

“If you look at it then you’ll know. It isn’t far so I’ll leave it for the time being. You’ll notice the details once you’ve arrived. Shambala, don’t make me nag you and come as well!”

JusticeMan suddenly pulled Shambala along with Ark.

“Um, why is it so noisy at dawn? What kind of people.....”

The murmuring was coming from an alley not far from where Ark’s companions were. It looked like there were 3 homeless people wrapped in hoods. When Merchant A, B and C were keeping an eye on Ark, they literally fell asleep right there. The sleepy Merchant B made an annoyed noise and lifted his head at the noisy sounds of Ark and his companions. He had a vacant expression for a short time before standing up in surprise.

“Eh? H-Hyung-nim! Hyung-nim! Wake up.”

Merchant A who was snoring through his nose opened his eyes tiredly. Merchant A rubbed at his swollen eyes with a frown.

“What the? What’s going on?”

“Those guys are moving.”

“What?”

Merchant A was suddenly wide awake and jumped up.

“Damn, they drank all night so why are they up this early? Hey, wake up!”

Merchant A kicked Merchant C and commanded him.

“Summon the mercenaries that you hired yesterday and tell them to come quickly. I’ll shadow them. As usual, communication is through the ‘Feather of Whispering’ and act quickly!”

Merchant B and C rushed down the alley on short legs. Merchant A also quickly packed his luggage and followed Ark.

‘As expected, you’re going after the treasure!’

Ark and his companions were collecting a huge amount of food from the market. The reason that so many users were buying food was because they were going on a long trip somewhere. Once they collected all the necessary clues, of course they would want to start treasure hunting. As expected, Ark and his companions immediately left Selebrid when they finished their shopping. Merchant A quickly whispered using the ‘Feather of Whispering.’

-Those guys have left Selebrid. How long until the mercenaries are gathered?

What? They’re not ready yet? Those children, standby until I give my order.....Anyway the warriors.....okay, sounds good. Once the mercenaries are gathered then come to this location.

Like a spy movie, Merchant A secretly kept up secure communications while following Ark. After Ark’s party left Selebrid, they ascended up the mountain path. But after a short time, the path they were walking on became lush greenery.

‘Huck huck huck. I should’ve exercised a little bit more.....’

Merchant A had poor stamina. He was out of breath in less than 1 hour. Furthermore, as there was no path the merchant had to push aside thick

bushes. He tripped over tree roots on the unfamiliar path and was out of breath in less than 1 hour. There was also no path for him to walk on so he had to walk through the forest. He tripped over roots on the unfamiliar path and got stuck on tree branches.

‘This is that Dark Wolf’s fault! In the future, I’ll certainly seize the map and cause him despair!’

Merchant A was burning with revenge.....Honestly, if it wasn’t for that than he wouldn’t have been able to keep up. After following a small stream for a while, the lush forest eventually came to an end. Ark was communicating with the party as they arrived.

‘Ohhhh, this is.....a golden opportunity!’

Merchant A’s eyes were sparkling. Hidden inside the woods deep in the mountains. What else but a thief’s hideout?

‘There’s no doubt. I’ve seen those flags planted above the wild plants at the Merchant’s Guild. The group of thieves that everyone is super careful about around Selebrid! If so.....?’

He could only think of one thing, they were trying to suppress the group of thieves in order to go somewhere.

‘The heavens are helping!’

He didn’t know what was going on inside. It was probably a dreadful battle with a lot of blood spilt! It was the ideal chance to get rid of Ark. Now the odds of victory was 100%! Just then, Merchant B and C arrived with the 20 mercenaries.

“Huck huck huck, Hyung-nim. Those guys?”

“Hu hu hu, my younger brothers. The saying that the heavens would help those who help themselves is true. They know nothing and are trying to suppress the thieves here in the mountains.”

Merchant A smiled coldly and clenched his fist firmly.

“If we storm in then the situation will end simply. We have to hurry before Dark Wolf and Blue Sword are killed by the thieves and drop the clues. Quickly use the scrolls before that happens!”

“I understand. Everyone heard? Start immediately!”

“Rush!”

Merchant A, B and C boldly led the mercenaries in. But when they arrived, they felt something strange. The mountain was really quiet for being in the middle of a battle. Was that all? Laughter was even occasionally heard. Merchant B felt something strange and tried to stop. However, it didn’t matter because Merchant A had already opened the door and shouted.

“Blue Sword, Dark Wolf! You guys.....eh?”

Merchant A trailed off with a bemused look. Hundreds of eyes had immediately turned to him when he opened the door. Of course, they should’ve been engaged in a bloody fight. However, there was nothing but Ark and the thieves staring at him.

“Eh, why.....why? Why aren’t you fighting?”

“What the? Who are those guys?”

“Blue sword? Dark Wolf?”

The thieves scowled at the merchants and mercenaries with unpleasant eyes. Yes, it was the achievement that JusticeMan mentioned in Selebrid. He was talking about the thieves gathered here. JusticeMan randomly rehabilitated the thieves. And two days ago, he had found the older Hyung that he had been looking for. The older Hyung was a boss bandit named Wangnuni with a level of 150. Usually they would never dare fighting against him, but JusticeMan had other forces. The thieves around Selebrid that he had rehabilitated! JusticeMan directed them at Wangnuni in waves and after a

long bloody battle, Wangnuni eventually surrendered and was rehabilitated. Thus, the number of thieves now following JusticeMan was 300 people.

Merchant A, B, and C realized that there was something wrong.

“H,Hyung-nim?”

“Hiccup!”

Merchant A started sweating. Although the merchants were frozen, when Merchant C hiccupped he accidentally tore the scrolls. He had wanted to use [Robbery] on Ark. However, he didn't specify the target so a thief was hit by mistake. The thief hit was the older Hyung-nim, Wangnuni. Wangnuni looked at Merchant C with no expression and laughed.

“What the? Are you trying to squeeze me?”

“No, it's not.....”

Merchant A grasped the situation too late and tried to withdraw when JusticeMan smiled and said.

“Hey guys, what is it that I always stress?”

“I'll serve food and aid in one hand. I'll do a good thing once a day. And the villain that doesn't repent would be soaked!”

The 200 thieves replied coldly.

“Okay, lock the door.”

“Yep!”

The thieves suddenly walked to the door. Although the merchants and mercenaries tried to retreat, their path was blocked. The situation alarmed the mercenaries who eventually pulled out their swords.

“Damn! It's not possible! We're stuck!”

“It is Hyung-nim's enemy! Get rid of all the litter!”

The thieves had been completely brainwashed by the torture of the chowder medley. JusticeMan had already become Wangnuni's hyung. And when someone opposed their hyung, it was the thieves' unwritten law that they would pay with their bodies. The thieves drew their swords and rushed in unison.

"Huck, Hyung-nim. Why on earth is it so different?"

"How should I know? We have no choice but to endure somehow!"

"Damn it, they will die. It should be around ten enemies for each person?"

The mercenaries cursed but it was too late for them to regret it. And soon a fierce battle took place.....if it could even be called a battle. The assassins were 30 levels higher than the thieves. However, the numbers was 15 times as much. 20 against 300. It couldn't possibly be called a fight. Moreover, there was also Ark's nursing skills as well as Roco's music. As there were many people, the skills became more effective. The thieves who received various buffs through nursing and music yelled and crushed the hired warriors.

"Hmm, why is it so dull?"

Ark felt like the battle was too dull. Just yesterday he had engaged in a bloody war with his partner against the pioneers in the Evil Silrion.....Compared to that, the level 120 mercenaries felt boring. He wasn't aware of it yet, but his experience with the Evil Silrion and Lee Myung-ryong had raised his standards to the highest level.

Then, a garbage bag was suddenly visible to the side. While the thieves had opened the door and beating the mercenaries, three garbage bags were stealthily moving away. When a thief passed them, they would stop and then move again. This pattern repeated until they managed to escape from the hideout.

'What the, that is?'

Ark stared at the garbage bags escaping to the mountain and gave an amazed laugh. It was the three merchants. In order to escape, they had disguised themselves as garbage bags. Whether it was because the disguise was effective or it wasn't worth wasting time on, they somehow managed to survive the rough fight. Then Ark stabbed his sword tip firmly into the ground.

"Hey, you guys. Where do you think you're going?"

The garbage bags flinched and chattered.

"Hyung-nim! We were discovered."

"Huk huk huk, Hyung-nim. Are we going to die? I'm scared."

"Just calm down. My younger brothers. I have an idea."

Merchant A swallowed his saliva and suddenly stood up. They stripped off their robes and revealed their true identity. It was small bodied dwarf. However, perhaps because they were merchants but they didn't have the distinctive muscles of the dwarves. With a bulging stomach and trembling hands, they seemed more like the Three Little Pigs than dwarves. Merchant A suddenly grabbed Ark's hand and begged.

"Please don't kill us. Blue Sword and Dark Wolf!"

"What? Don't kill you?"

"Oh, the truth is, in fact.....we are.....fans! Yes, that's right. We are fans!"

"Fan? How did you know I was related to Dark Wolf?"

"That is.....we were interested. Yes, interested."

Merchant A nodded his head as he twisted his hands together.

"Your fight was so impressive that we wanted to find out more so we hide ourselves and watched. That's when we learned that you were Dark Wolf."

Our respect was burning so much that we were chasing after you to ask if we could organize a fan club.”

“Oh, really? That was why you’ve been chasing us?”

“Fan meeting! Will you have a fan meeting? That’s it. Ha ha ha, we weren’t told in advance anything about this fight. The work became twisted up.....because some strange fellows were mixed in among the fan club members. Anyway, as expected of Blue Sword and Dark Wolf. Though they looked quite strong, they weren’t a match for you. Ha ha ha, you are great.”

“H,Hyung-nim.....”

Merchant B and C looked at their hyung-nim with miserable eyes. It was truly absurd. Ark had already witnessed their meeting with Jewel in the alley. He knew that they were after Magaro’s clues. They had obviously hired mercenaries to steal the map from Ark. If he let them go, there was no guarantee that they wouldn’t try it again.

‘Thanks to the thieves, a crisis was averted. But if I was alone then the surprise attack would’ve robbed me of the map. I have to make them lose any will to try it again.’

Something flickered at the corner of Ark’s eyes.

‘This is a chance!’

A pair of eyes flashed in the darkness. A black mask was hiding the face while the body was wrapped in black clothes. The Red Palm symbol.....an assassin from the Dark Brother organization. Yes, it wasn’t only the merchants that shadowed Ark’s party. The Dark Brother had watched Ark

since Selebrid and also chased after him. While the merchants were distracting Ark, he took advantage of it to advance to the rear and develop an elimination plan.

‘A mistake in judgement. Surely the thieves here are a part of Ark’s group. Chet, the merchants entering the mountains should of had the element of surprise.....There’s no helping it. With my power I cannot deal with more than 300 thugs. Although it is vexing, there should be another chance.....’

The assassin who was hiding outside assessed the situation and turned around without doing anything. Then there was an unexpectedly good fortune. The foolish merchants disguised themselves as rubbish bags and escaped to the mountain, and then Ark pursued them by himself. The rehabilitation members and the thieves were busy with the mercenaries and paid no attention to the outside.

‘This is a great opportunity!’

The assassin pulled out a sword without hesitation. He was level 250. He was different from the ordinary assassins and was armed with a variety of skills; he was the super secret assassin from the Dark Brother. It wasn’t possible to count the immense number of foreigners that had died by his hand. Although it wasn’t possible to handle all his colleagues, Ark had displayed a careless amount of confidence and gone out by himself.

‘Anyway, the goal of the Dark Brother organization is Ark. I don’t care about the other guys. Okay, I can’t give him time to escape to the hideout!’

The assassin made a deadly resolution and used all his buffs to increase his abilities. His damage was boosted using ‘Sword Aura,’ his traces were erased using ‘Light Step,’ ‘Critical Hit’ was used to maximize the chances of a critical strike and so on.....But his special moves were separate from that. The ‘Blood Thrill’ was a special skill that only an assassin of the Dark Brother could use. It was a fatal assassination skill which converted 50% of his health to offensive damage and that transfer meant that one blow was

deadly! The moment the attack was successful, he would lose 50% of his health but now was the time to use all his power. Once he used the skill, his sword changed to a bloody red colour. The assassin approached like a ghost and struck Ark with a strong blow.

-You have received a critical hit from the surprise assassination skill. There is also an addition damage of  $250 \times 3$  thanks to the Blood Thrill skill.

The total damage is  $\times 2$  and you have been stunned for 10 seconds.

Ark suddenly felt his spine tingle before he lost an absurd amount of health. Three times the damage of 250 was 750! With an additional double damage, he had lost 1,500 health with one blow. Ark's health instantly went down to 500. That wasn't all. He felt drunk as he was hit with the additional stun effect.

'What, what the?'

Ark freaked out and turned his body around. The masked man with a red palm symbol instantly caught his eye.

"You, you're from the Dark Brother? Don't tell me Andel.....?"

"Never, this is the will of the Dark Brother organization."

"What?"

"Did you think you would get away with killing people from the Dark Brother? You can never escape the hand of the Dark Brother. Although you can revive with the secret skill of the foreigners, you would have to buy a village to escape from the Dark Brother. Wouldn't that be more painful to a foreigner than dying?"

When the assassin showed up, the merchants who didn't know the situation immediately left with a puzzled expression.

"Hyung-nim. What happened back there?"

“How should I know? Anyway, hopefully that black guy can defeat Dark Wolf.”

“Then.....?”

“If we see the chance then we’ll use the scrolls! And I was negotiate with the black one.....”

The merchants whispered together and looked at the two of them with a sense of expectancy. However, Ark wasn’t in a situation where he could worry about the ulterior motives of the merchants.

“Damn, you bastard.....!”

Thanks to the surprise attack, Ark had the injustice of losing a lot of health. And because he was stunned, his body felt heavy like a lead bag. When he was stunned, evasion, attacking and using his skills were all blocked. The duration was only 10 seconds, but when looking at the offensive power of the assassin that was plenty of time for three or four more attacks.

‘Being careless for just a short moment can cause such a fatal failure.....’

Pepeng! He received another critical hit and lost 300 health.

The sword once again targeted Ark’s neck. It was a 100% chance of death! The assassin’s eyes shone with an eerie light as he became confident of his victory.

“It is the end!”

“Ark!”

A black shadow suddenly came running in at the desperate moment. And there was a shower of fists towards the assassin who was trying to deal the final blow. He aimed at Ark’s neck but the sword suddenly became encased in solid stone.

‘Petrification of Blood!’

Ark looked up in surprise at the person who had ran out. Shambala! Shambala had a passive skill to detect assassins. He had used the skill to check if there were any other mercenaries around and detected Ark and the assassin outside the hideout! And he used Petrification of Blood without confirming who the opponent was.

“Ark, it’s your turn!”

Shambala shouted from one side. It was the pincer attack that they used countless times in the Evil Silrion. As soon as Ark was released from the stun, he used Dark Blade. While the defense was raised by 500% when Petrification of Blood was used, it meant nothing to Dark Blade which ignored all defense.

Putt putt putt peng, the violent critical hits flowed continuously.

However, the assassin was level 250. Even though ‘Blood Thrill’ consumed 50% of his health, after 3~4 critical hits he still had a lot of health left. Meanwhile, the assassin rushed towards Ark after Petrification of Blood wore off.

“Ugh, Ark, even if I die I’ll take you to hell with me!”

“Holy shit!”

Profanities burst from Ark’s mouth. He had thought it was possible to finish the fight before Petrification of Blood wore off. He only had 200 health left, but because of that he didn’t feel the need to drink an expensive potion. Therefore he would die with one hit! His habit of trying to save money had caused a crisis again. However, Shambala unexpected stepped of front of him and blocked Ark. Although they weren’t in the Evil Silrion anymore, he still had the unconscious habit of protecting Ark.

“Ark, Whirlwind of Death!”

Shambala shouted before pressing the assassin. It was the pincer technique that Ark and Shambala had developed in the Evil Silrion. The assassin was

surrounded on both sides. And he was overwhelmed with a series of punches and kicks! The damage itself wasn't that high, but since an abnormal state was caused every time an attack hit, the assassin got slaughtered.

"Ugh, drat. But as long the Dark Brother organization exists, a 2nd and 3rd assassin will come after you....."

Eventually, the assassin muttered pathetically and collapsed. Ark looked away from the assassin. And he caught the merchants who jumped in surprise. He rolled his eyes before saying with a smile.

"Whoa, as expected of Dark Wolf and Blue Sword! Ha ha ha, I knew it was possible for you to win."

"....."

Ark glared silently. Ark knew that they had been silently rooting for the assassin. If he died in this situation. Merchant A noticed with his keen senses and quickly pulled out a contract. After writing something down, he extended it towards Ark.

"In fact, this was what I was trying to give Dark Wolf when searching for you!"

"What is this?

"So that Dark Wolf can concentrate on his matches, it is the support money donated by the fan club!"

"Donations?"

#### A Merchant's Agreement.

A person with this agreement will pay you 10 gold once a month (10 days) which you can receive at any branch of the Merchant's Guild. The merchant who drew up the contract will open an account at the Merchant's guild for the recipient, in order to settle the accounts.

This agreement will last until the contracted merchant is bankrupt or the

written contract disappears.

<Recipient: Ark= Dark Wolf>

‘This is.....a debit card?’

Ark’s eyes shone brightly as he read the contract.

‘These guys have other ulterior motives but.....’

In fact, killing the three little pigs had no apparent benefit. There was no guarantee that they would give up on the map after being killed. If they started developing a grudge like Andel’s then it would become more annoying. If so, wouldn’t pretending not to know and then reaping the profits be more beneficial?

But.....the amount of money was quite low if he was to pretend.....

“How many fan club members are there?”

“Yes? Just.....the people who have come with us.....so 23 people.”

“So 23 people pay 10 gold every 10 days.....that’s 50 silver per day? Are you confused between donating and begging? Only that much money? You asked to give it first. But now you’re trying to patronize me? No, are you really a fan? Perhaps you have a different purpose? In that case.....”

Ark felt offended and glared. That was only enough for three hungry people to eat for a couple of days! Did they think they could catch him and have him immediately accept (?). Merchants B and C who felt the crisis looked at their brother with tears in their eyes. Merchant A was quick to revise the contract.

“Oh, I made a mistake. It was actually 20 gold.”

“.....”

Ark kept a meaningful silence and a dark cloud was cast on Merchant A’s face.

“3, 30 gold? -Uhh, of course. 40 gold! Anymore would be too much for the fans.....”

Merchant A eventually muttered tearfully.

‘Sheesh, the atmosphere here is quite heavy.’

Ark struck them in the heart. Ark was the type that would suck out the bone marrow if he had the chance. Because he was instinctively aware of the opponent’s wallets. If he tried to squeeze any more money from those guys then they would probably just give up. In addition, if they became bankrupt then the contract would also disappear. If he left it alone, he would be able to suck out more money for a longer time.

’40 gold every 10 days. It’s not a small amount of money.’

“Ah, you’re fans as expected. I cannot ignore the sincerity of my fans.”

Ark’s face went through a 180 degree change and the decision was made. The world was love and peace, but Ark understood that a person who cared about money could also be good.

“Do you accept?”

“Of course. But we are two people.”

“Yes?”

“Didn’t you say you were fans of Dark Wolf and Blue Sword? So the donations should be given fairly. Unless.....perhaps you aren’t our fans?”

Ark’s face gave an impression of frowning. Although Shambala didn’t know the situation, he would figure it out later. He didn’t like the idea of splitting 40 gold evenly. Merchant A had to whimper and make another contract again. Now Ark nodded with a friendly smile.

“Thank you. I should remember a nice fan like you. But don’t I need your name in order to memorize it? What is your name?”

“Yes? That is, we’re just.....a passing fan?”

“I’m a man who knows that I should also cherish a passing fan.”

“.....We’re Buksil, Sapjil and Ulmeok.”

“Yes, Buksil, Sapjil and Ulmeok. Okay, I’ll remember that. Ah, and.....if anyone figures out that I’m Dark Wolf, I’ll look at my fan club president first. Do you know what I mean?”

Ark pointed at the 300 thieves lined up behind him. He was politely threatening them to keep their mouths shut! Then they hastily left the mountain.

“Dark Wolf, I’m looking forward to your next match. Fighting!”

“Fighting!”

Thus the merchants left the mountains alive. Merchant C, Ulmeok murmured in a tearful voice just like his name.

“Hyung-nim. What will happen to us now?”

“Hu hu hu, it’s okay.”

Buksil had a sinister smile on his face.

“Do you know why I was fearful and polite around him? That’s about it. You guys know about that contract? The merchant agreement states that he had to pick up the money at the Merchant’s Guild. What does that mean?”

“T-then.....?”

“Yes. Sooner or later they’ll put clues together and go to find the treasure. But since the income will arrive on a certain date, sooner or later they’ll have to withdraw the money. We can just sit back and watch their movements. In the meanwhile, we should think up a new strategy and at the last moment.....we’ll snatch the treasure. Our goal now is not the combination of clues. It is obtaining the treasure.”

“Oooh, it’s like the bears hiding until the money is found and then turning everything around. As expected of Hyung-nim. Just thinking about that moment!”

“But how long will it take?”

Then, Sapjil asked with an uneasy look.

“What if they don’t look for the treasure right away? One month is 10 days in real time. It is 40 gold every ten days so for the two of them it would be 80 gold, that’s 240 gold out of one month’s account. If they take 2 months it would be 480 golds, three months 720 gold.....”

Now Buksil’s face turned dark. He never even considered the money that would be spent. However, he soon vigourously shook his head.

“It’s fine. Those guys will certainly look for the treasure straight away.”

“But if they don’t find it within two or three months.....we will become broke.”

“.....”

The merchants flinched and were silent for a moment. If Ark continued cleaning out money from their accounts, the merchants would become bankrupt. The NPCs from the Merchant Guild responsible for merchant accounts or leased warehouses would take all the gold contained in their bags. There would also be a huge penalty given to the credit and skills! While they had to give money to Ark, they had no intention of filing a bankruptcy report. If they stole the treasure and completed the Grandmaster’s quest, they calculated that the compensation was worth the possible penalty. However, that was if they managed to snatch the treasure. What if they became broke before that? They could see that without money, they would bitterly lose everything they’ve worked for.

“Let’s go earn money!”

Buksil cried out as they ran down the mountain.

“We underestimated the situation while we were cleaning up.”

JusticeMan muttered and scratched his head.

“What?”

“Well, as I said.”

JusticeMan spoke with a serious voice while folding his arms.

“Although the thieves have been rehabilitated.....these guys still haven’t fully become new men. No, even if they become a new person what will they do now? Their name is red.....”

“Chaotic.”

“Yes, that is a problem. If the chaotic status isn’t removed, they won’t be able to enter villages. So they can’t sell anything, even if they hunt. If they can’t pay the bills then they would probably be forced to become thieves again.”

He was worried about how the NPC thieves would live. Other users might laugh if they heard, but JusticeMan considered it a serious problem.

“But according to the information that Jjak-tung discovered, there is a statute on the chaotic NPC. If they don’t commit a crime, then over time their alignment would gradually return to neutral.”

Ark also knew that information. When he asked Lorenzo about his future in

Cairo, Lorenzo said that he didn't intend to stay in Cairo. If he visited a garrison in the city after becoming neutral, he would be able to get rid of the chaotic state with just a small bail. One of the reasons that Roco tightened the amount of money spent was to save some for the thieves' bail. Therefore, it was inevitable that the thieves would follow JusticeMan's party with a sincere heart!

"So I decided to thoroughly train them how to survive here on edible wild plants and so on.....but the Dark Brother organization knows about this place now? Even if they don't come back, they might inform their guards of Selebrid of this location."

JusticeMan scratched his beard. Sometimes Ark realized how kind he truly was and how rare it was in this world. Anyway, JusticeMan's heart was heavy so he complained to Ark. It was because of Ark that the Dark Brother discovered the hideout. He was responsible.

"The assassin that attacked is the problem. Only one guy has managed to track you so far, but more of them will probably come. Well, you managed to get away but if more come here then it would become a problem. If only there was a place to stay while avoiding the eyes of the guards and the Dark Brother.....but a village is needed to train the 300 thieves to become people. Since they've stopped stealing, they have no choice but to enter a village for several living necessities."

Ark was worried about the same thing. His life had become entangled with the Dark Brother organization. The crisis was averted, but if the same situation was repeated then Ark would find it quite frustrating. Of course they couldn't follow Ark forever in the game, but he needed a place to hide and avoid the attentions of the Dark Brother for a while.

Once he heard the words a proper village, Ark's head reflexively went up.

"I know the right place."

“What? Where?”

“It is a small village in the Argus Mountains, where there are no guards and the villagers also don’t like outsiders. In addition, there are many areas that haven’t been explored yet. Ajusshi can probably hide the thieves there until the chaotic state is released.”

“Ooh, there is such a place?”

“Yes, there is no guarantee that they will take 200 thieves in a chaotic state.....I’ll try to somehow convince the village chief to meet them.”

“Okay. Let’s go there at once.”

JusticeMan became motivated and looked towards the hills. As soon as Ark finished talking, they began moving around and making preparations for the thieves to travel. Meanwhile, Ark looked around for Shambala. Shambala was searching the body of the Dark Brother assassin.

“Shambala, I was thinking of going with ajusshi to the Argus Mountains. Did you want to come with us?”

“I.....might have some other business.”

“Other business?”

“Yes, you called this guy a Dark Brother?”

Shambala pointed to the red palm mark on the assassin’s mask. Then he pulled out the blue dagger and compared it to the mark.

“A red palm symbol!”

“Didn’t I tell you before? In fact, I was looking for information on the Dark Brother in Selebrid. The dagger I had before the ‘Black Frost Blade’ was made by quenching it in the blood of 100 foreigners. It was a part of my job quest.”

The words seemed like something from a horror movie. However, Shambala

said it without blinking an eye.

“The dagger quest connected to the quest about seeking information. Therefore I wandered Selebrid trying to find this information.....”

“Then?”

“Once I found a clue on the ‘Dark Brother,’ I’ll have to go back to Selebrid. Anyway, we can’t do anything without Sid and there is the level restriction. So let’s separate for the moment. When you’re level 150, let’s meet up again in Selebrid. How is it?”

“Okay, send a letter after your business is done.”

“I’ll do that. And.....it would be better for you to have this.”

Shambala passed him Magaro’s secret map.

“It’s only my gut feeling, but the difficulty for my current quest seems quite high. So please hold on to this for the time being. If you leave it in your snake, then I don’t have to worry about it dropping.

“Okay, ah, I’ll give this to you.”

Ark handed him 1 contract which had been squeezed from the merchants. Ark couldn’t use it anyway since the recipient was Shambala. Shambala laughed when he looked through the contract.

“Those dwarves from before. As expected, you managed to squeeze money from them.”

“Well I thought about it and collected money from them. If you don’t want it then I can stop it.”

“Who would complain about money?”

Shambala returned to Selebrid holding the contract. Ark separated from Shambala who he had met after a while with an open heart. However, Shambala was Shambala and Ark was Ark! New World was large with a lot

of things to do!

“Ark, we’re ready!”

“Yes, let’s set off. To the pioneer village of Lancel!”

## Lancel Village

“Chief Kim, have you ever heard of a user called Ark?”

“Ark?”

Kim Gwon-tae asked puzzled.

“Who is that?”

“One of the candidates.”

“Let’s see? I’ve never heard that name? No matter how smart I am, I cannot remember the names of the 2000 candidates. But why? Did you find some useful information?”

“No. Someone just mentioned him. Did you ever look at his reports?”

That person who asked was Ho Myung-hwan from the planning department. Ho Myung-hwan had received the request a few days ago, when Kang Mi-su from the reception desk asked about Ark. He heard the information that Ark had showed a remarkable achievement in the event quest. However, that day was when the planning department was overturned. A new event quest in the Brandt Mountains was suddenly cancelled. Thanks to that he forgot for a while, until a chance meeting at lunchtime made him remember. Kim Gwon-tae looked at the monitor and spoke in a bored voice.

“Go and ask Cain-ssi in the reference room. Because Cain-ssi manages and prints out all the notable reports. If there’s anything valuable then it would be there.”

“I understand.”

Ho Myung-hwan went and visited the reference room. Cain who was in charge of the reference room was organizing the reports that had come in yesterday.

“Hey, Cain-ssi. It’s been a while. Have you received any reports from the user Ark?”

“Ark?”

Cain looked over the email list and nodded.

“Yes, it has come in.”

“Have you printed it?”

“Um.....this user is included in the automatic deletion group.”

“Automatic deletion?”

“Yes, the test reports have been coming in for a few months and apart from the top 20%, all the other reports are thrown away. Because it is difficult for Chief Kim and the boss to read all 2000 reports, some were excluded early on. So these days I don’t even print out the emails and just delete them immediately.”

“Why are we paying them a salary just to not read their reports?”

“Who knows with Section Chief Ha?”

“Anyway, are there any emails that haven’t been deleted yet?”

“You want me to take out a copy?”

“Yes, please give me a copy. As I have some spare time to read it.”

“There’s a reason why the deleted group isn’t seen.....”

Cain murmured that it was useless while printing out a report. Upon receiving the report, Ho Myung-hwan realized why it was on the dropouts list.

‘What is this? A kid would be able to write better than this.’

Ark’s report was really messed up. The second problem was the content. There was no basis for creating the report. The report should be well

organized so that the reader could understand the information straight away. But instead of a neat summary, Ark's report had jumbled sentences and context that made it difficult to understand what the contents were. It was reasonable. Although Ark fabricated his educational background, he was actually only a high school graduate. Since he tried to quit several times, he barely graduated. He had never seen how to write a report. So he just wrote everything he experienced freely, like a diary. But was that all? Since he played the game for an average of 17 hours, he had no time to write the reports so he wrote it while sleepy. Naturally, even an elementary school student's writing on their homework would be better. On the other hand, Global Exos was a gathering of the elites. Ho Myung-hwan was a bright student who graduated from K university. Ark's report was practically impossible for him to read. However, he pushed through it and read the first page. Ho Myung-hwan realized something when reading the report.

'What is this? The user on the dropout list is level 127?'

The level was enough to make Ho Myung-hwan surprised for the first time. The current candidates in the top category were level 130. Even the famous Holy Knight Alan was level 138. But one of the dropouts was level 127? However, the level wasn't the only thing in the report that made Ho Myung-hwan surprised. This time, the content of the report submitted by Ark was the match details in the Evil Silrion. More than 1,000 people participated in the tournament! Yet in the final match, he bet the pioneers and won the tournament. Like most of the planning office, Ho Myung-hwan was also a player in New World. Although he didn't have time to go see the match in the Evil Silrion, he heard about how great it was through the newsletter that the Evil Silrion published. It was natural. Beating 1000 participants and the pioneers was a big issue. Ho Myung-hwan quickly found a video posted by a user on the Internet. Thousands of spectators cheered as a dark wolf from the wolf clan kicked a warrior in the chest! The fight scenes left a strong impression on Ho Myung-hwan's heart.

‘Ark is the Dark Wolf from the rumours? Then how did he transform into a wolf?’

Ark’s wolf form stimulated Ho Myung-hwan’s curiosity. Since there was no reference to the Underground World in this report, there was no way for him to know the circumstances. Curiosity was something that could make people go crazy.

‘No, the transformation isn’t that important. If he was able to win the Evil Silrion with a partner, then isn’t it a big problem that he isn’t on the list? Why did Section Chief Ha refuse this user?’

He couldn’t understand a single thing with his common sense.

‘Anyway, I can’t just ignore the problem and move on!’

As a member of Global Exos and a user in New World.....

The achievements of this user couldn’t be buried like this. Ark’s fight scene was powerful enough to evoke a sense of responsibility in him. However, since the section chief of the planning department Ha Myung-woo had placed Ark on the dropouts list, there was no way for him to recover the other reports.

‘I’ll watch a little more for the time being. If there is any noteworthy content then I will show Section Chief Ha before it’s too late.’

Ho Myung-hwan returned to the reference room and immediately asked.

“Cain-ssi, when this friend’s report comes in please send to me. I’ll manage it from now on. Ah, have you also heard of a candidate called Shambala?”

“Wait a minute. Ah, here it is. Shambala is also a dropout.”

“That friend as well? I understand. Then please give me his reports too.”

“You’re not in charge?”

“No, the interest is just personal.”

“I understand.”

Ark’s employment activities was about to enter a new phase. He managed to avoid being eliminated or having his reports thrown in the shredder. But he would have to wait a little bit more to see if this was luck or misfortune.

“Almost there. We’ll see Lancel Village soon.”

Ark looked up and said.

It had been four days since they’ve left Selebrid with 300 thieves, and they had arrived two days earlier than expected. The reason was simple. They just had to walk in a straight line to reach Lancel from Selebrid. Of course, normal users wouldn’t even dare attempt this kind of trip. This was because the continent was complicated, with a mixture of low level and high level hunting grounds in the same area. However, there was 300 of them. What could possibly frighten them? Even if a large monster level 200 suddenly interrupted them, it would be no problem. No, the thieves would just pull out their knives while cheering wildly.

“That’s great. We’re tired of eating wheat bread!”

“Huhuhu, but isn’t it easy to cut 300 servings?”

“Ark-hyungnim can make his cooked beef!”

The 300 thieves swarmed around the meat. The meat from the level 200 Large Grizzly feed 300 people in no time. Even though the march was tough, cooking the meat from high level monsters caused his survival cooking skill to rapidly grow. But was that all? When 300 people searched a forest, it was easy to find ingredients. Thanks to that, quite a lot of ingredients from high level hunting grounds were gathered. However, the pleasant trip came to an

end as they arrived at Lancel Village.

“Did you say this was the village?”

“Eh.....?”

Ark lifted his head and looked at the village in the distance. Lancel Village was not like Ark remembered. The size of the village had become quite different. There used to be 40 houses that had been abandoned but now there were more than 100 houses lined up. The outskirts of the village was also lined with a fence that surrounded everything. Well, he sent migrants here so of course it would be extended. However, what he couldn't understand was the village's atmosphere. The buildings in the town will full of individuality. Some houses were built on top of trees while others were tucked into the ground. With the brightly coloured paint, it looked like a town from a children's storybook. He had travelled around New World and seen all sorts of villages, but it was the first time he had seen one like this.

‘Did I go the wrong way?’

Ark was stunned and opened the map window to confirm it. Then he checked that it was Lancel Village several times before he was certain.

“Hmm, somehow it feels like a pleasant village.”

“Yes, if possible I'd love to live in a place like this.”

Fortunately, JusticeMan and the thieves seemed to like the strange village. Ark was in the lead as they entered Lancel Village. There were NPCs around that Ark recognized. They were the Meow warriors wearing worker outfits as well as the raccoon clan, who were sprouting beards from the side of their nose. In addition, there were also cartographer Hansen's companions that he had rescued from the thief lair.

“Oh, it is Ark! Ark!”

The first person (?) to run up was a Meow shaman.

“Hmm Hmm, am I right? Somehow you smell like Ark.”

Jana approached closely with her tail waving behind her.

“Ara? Why are you here?”

“I was bored by myself. And it is more relaxed here.”

“But you’re the Shaman. Shouldn’t you be keeping up the temple?”

“It does not matter. Well, it isn’t stolen.....”

Well.....whenever he sees the Meow, the word cat always enters his head. How indulgent are they that even their Shaman is just laying around eating? Jana forgot about the temple and displayed an interest in Ark. She shook her tail softly and twitched her nose, before suddenly rubbing against his body and making a sweet sound.

“Heung, have you changed and become even nicer since the last time I saw you? How is it? Is your answer to my offer from before still valid? After all this time you still don’t want to date me? I’ll treat you well. Because cats are kind.”

“What, what the?”

Roco jumped out with an uncomfortable look.

“What? What is with that attitude? Shaking your tail, don’t you feel any shame? No, what is your relationship with Ark oppa?”

“Ara? Who is this female? Ark, did you replace me with this new girl while we’re apart?”

“Eh.....so.....”

Ark had a bewildered expression as Jana rubbed against his body.

“Well, if you’re a man you should have one or two women. It’s okay. I understand. The Meow believe in polygamy.”

“P-polygamy? Am I crazy? What kind of era is this.....”

“Ah, it’s noisy, noisy. Ark shouldn’t have to put up with a sharp voice like that. I’ll show you the village.”

“Can’t you put his hand down?”

Roco shouted while pulling at his opposite arm. However, the unexpected ambush was suddenly stopped.

Slap, slap!

All of a sudden someone emerged from the crowd and pulled off the hands of the two girls. And then burrowed into Ark’s arms. It was Hanson’s daughter, Sarah. Ark was embarrassed by Sarah’s sudden behaviour. But Roco and Jana was even more embarrassed than Ark.

“What is this? Oppa?”

“Sarah, can you please get out of the way?”

The two women jumped as Sarah became frightened and dug even deeper. In the end, Ark stood up and said.

“Stop. What am I, a celebrity? And Sarah is still a child. Come on Sarah.”

Ark wound up holding Sarah’s hand as he entered the village. However, Roco just looked. When Ark selected Sarah as the winner, a small smile spread on her mouth! At that moment she felt a woman’s intuition. That young child was an enemy!

‘I was thinking too easily!’

In fact, Roco had a slightly relaxed mood so far. Because Ark had never shown any interest in women, it wasn’t necessary for her to be impatient. If she acted too quickly she might incite his hatred instead. That was what she thought. Suddenly, two women appeared so her anxiety increased. Of course, Jana and Sarah were NPCs. However, if a man had women who looked like Japanese wooden dolls showing interest, it was female psychology to feel anxious.

‘Right, I can see that Ark oppa is a great guy. It is strange that he has had no girlfriends yet.’

Frankly, it wasn’t that strange. But everything was in the eye of the beholder.

‘Whether in reality or the game, I need to manage oppa strictly from now on.’

Roco made a serious resolution. And she caught up to Ark while having a desperate eye fight with Jana. But JusticeMan just laughed and murmured.

“Huhuhu, as expected, when competitors appear then love heats up.”

“Now we’ll be seeing even more.”

At that time, Hassan let out a huge laugh with her thick belly.

“Hahaha, it is indeed the Truthseeker. If you’re a descendant of Hero Maban then of course you’ll be popular with women.”

“You are?”

“I am the Meow elder, Hassan. I am the person who saw Ark’s potential with one look and entered him on the path of the Truthseeker. And who are you?”

“I am JusticeMan. Ark and I are very close. It is nice to meet you and I hope we become closer in the future.”

“Is that so? Mmmm, but have we met somewhere before? Somehow I feel like we’re really similar?”

“You too? I also feel that.”

“Huhuhu.”

“Huhuhuhu.”

JusticeMan and Hassan laughed together while covering their faces. Actually, their two faces were slightly similar. There are also people in the world who connect in such a way. Anyway, Ark finally arrived at the general store surrounded by the crowd. The temporary chief of Lancel Village was in charge of the store.

“Oh, Ark, it has been too long!”

Galen welcomed him with a wide smile.

“The town’s atmosphere has changed quite a lot.”

“Well, it is all because of you. The village has been safe thanks to the Meow warriors you sent. And using his knowledge of construction, Hansen has also helped rebuild the village. But the people you sent from the Brandt Mountains have really shined. They’re not very talkative but are excellent craftsmen. Thanks to them, the new houses built aren’t lacking and we are also able to begin trading. These days, immigrants have come because they’ve heard the news.”

“I’m glad.”

“Well, there is still a long way to go before we can become the intermediary point between Giran and Jackson. I’m sorry but I’ll have to trouble you some more.”

It sounded like the <Find New Settlers> quest had been completed. Yet the quest achievement for Lancel Village was only 60%. The old depressed atmosphere had changed completed for it to be mistaken for other towns, and Galen can’t help but be satisfied. Therefore, customer satisfaction was at 100%. Ark thought for a moment before starting to talk.

“Today I came to ask for some help with a problem.”

“A problem? Are you talking about settlers?”

“Yes, I’ve brought 300 people who want to stay in this village.”

“300 people!”

Galen shouted with a bright look in his eyes.

“It must have been your plan to send people over slowly to tease me. Where do you gather so many people that want to immigrate here? There is nothing to discuss. Settlers are always welcome here.”

“But there is a little problem.”

Ark had a perplexed face and confessed the situation. The 300 settlers were in fact former thieves that still had the chaotic condition. Galen had a serious expression.

“.....I understand the situation. Yes, Lancel village certainly need more settlers. But if those people.....you know that we are just beginning to build the pioneer village? Moreover, my dream is to create an intermediary point between Giran and Jackson. If there are 300 criminals, who would visit such a town? In addition, the villagers.....”

Ark had expected Galen’s reaction. That was the reason why Ark accompanied the thieves.

“Galen ajusshi.”

Ark opened his eyes and looked sadly at Galen.

“It really is a pity. Have you already lost the original intention?”

“Original intention?”

“That’s right. Wasn’t this village founded by the great leader Lancel? He once spent his dark days slaughtering people, but didn’t he change himself and decided to devote himself to the world by building this village. He dedicated his whole life to the village. The truly free village that he dreamed about! I was truly impressed when ajusshi said that he would reconstruct that village. That was why I decided to help ajusshi out.”

“That, is that so.....”

“Yes! I admit it. The people I’ve brought are thieves. They stole the luggage of innocent people and sometimes even took lives. But!”

Ark pointed towards JusticeMan with a passionate voice.

“The thieves have met a wonderful leader just like Lancel and have decided to live new lives too. But the world just treated them coldly. If they are

treated coldly even here, what would Lancel think? If the people who have no place to go become thieves again, is that their fault? Can ajusshi really use Lancel's name if you say things like that? They are just hoping for an opportunity. It was for opportunities like this that Lancel decided to build the village!"

"Guys, I am crying."

"Ark-hyungnim.....!"

The impressed rehabilitation members and thieves had tears on the faces. The villagers looked at them with a little bit of compassion.

"Umm....."

When the atmosphere became strange, Galen let out a pained groan. It was an emotional logic that couldn't be rebutted. Ark noticed that Galen was shaken and quickly drove in a wedge.

"I'm not asking you to accept them as a part of the village immediately. They also know that they can't be accepted right away. I'm just asking permission for them to be allowed near the village."

"They're not staying inside the village?"

"Yes, they said that they haven't washed off their sins yet. When you have a criminal as a resident, it would certainly cause trouble. Therefore they'll work eagerly to become a new person and enter the village openly, they said. Isn't that wonderful?"

Of course, it didn't have anything to do with Lancel Village. Lancel Village still didn't have any guards. However, it wasn't possible to allow chaotic NPCs into Lancel Village that had just started trading. In order to avoid the Dark Brother, they had to make it difficult to track them. Therefore, the rehabilitated thieves would live in an area near the village. They would wait there until the NPC's tendencies went back to neutral. However although he trusted the mental training, he didn't know how fast it would take to return to

normal. JusticeMan was trying to make the rehabilitated company do all the work. The thieves would learn to adapt to society by watching from the side. New World was started with an initial goal and the results were consistent. In the end, Ark managed to persuade Galen.

“I see. Then I agree to your proposal.”

With a ringing sound, two information windows appeared.

-Art of Communication has risen by 10.

‘Find New Settlers’ quest has been updated. You have decided to migrate a group of thieves with nowhere to go to Lancel Village. However, the chaotic thieves are not yet ready to live with the ordinary residents. Even when they are transformed into residents, they’ll need a lot of time and effort. However, they have a lot of potential even though they have no knowledge about society. The investment of time and effort will certainly be rewarded.

<New Settlers Found: 60% complete (+30%)>

The thieves were not immediately added to the achievement for the finding settlers quest. The number would be added to the achievement once they returned to the neutral status. Then there was another message window.

You have settled people who don’t have a special occupation.

The possible of thieves migrating to the village has risen by 70%. But suddenly a lot of the settlers food and material circumstances have decreased by 50%. In addition, unity has fallen by 30% due to their chaotic tendencies. If unity falls below 60% then there is a high possibility of the new settlers leaving, and in some cases even residents would leave the village.

<Their potential can apply to anything. If the thieves alignment becomes neutral and they gain knowledge and ability in commerce then the food situation should improve.>

He knew that the migration of the thieves meant that there would be a significant penalty. And the rehabilitated thieves were also unemployed. They were a blank slate that doesn't know anything. However in New World, NPCs that can learn new skills could be an advantage. The religious population could enlighten the thieves to create a priest. If the food situation was insufficient then they could learn to be farmers or cooks, or if the security was bad then they could train as guards. When he explained it to JusticeMan, he was surprised and jumped up excited.

“At one time I wanted to operate such facilities.”

Galen was also supportive once he decided to accept the request.

“Since you are going to become a part of the village one day, I can’t allow you to sleep on the streets.”

Galen asked for Hanson’s advice, who found an inconspicuous place not far from the village. And a group of raccoons built a simple housing structure. In addition, he gave them the necessary food needed for the rehabilitation process. JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members were the training supervisors of the facility. Therefore, the Samcheong College of Education was created in New World.

“Yesterday we were rubbish. We should repay the residents of Lancel Village as soon as possible and become people that can contribute to the village.”

“Yes!”

“Rotten spirit comes from the rotten flesh! From today onwards, we’ll take your body and spirit apart and rebuild you!”

From then on, JusticeMan trained the thieves day and night. They ran up the mountains as stamina training and even joined the Meow in subjugating monsters. Sometimes they would visit the town where the raccoons taught them various disciplines. So after several days of training at the camp, the thieves started to gradually change.

-The alignment of the thieves has risen by 5.

JusticeMan's education was certainly effective. Since the result of the training was shown with a number, JusticeMan became even more inspired. A positive result would cause a positive effect. The thieves became even more devoted to training and being polite to the residents. Thanks to that, the unity that had fallen 60% was recovering.

“That’s it. For now I don’t have to worry about this place.”

With the training spot occupied, Ark could finally rest. When Ark entered the village from the training camp, Galen immediately approached.

“There is something I would like to show you.”

Galen took Ark to a home located in the centre of the village. It was a newly built cabin that still had the fresh smell of timber.

“What is this house? Why is it newly built?”

Galen grinned and replied.

“It is your house.”

“Yes?”

“It is something that I had actually thought of before. I asked you to find some settlers, yet I honestly didn’t have any big expectations. But you never forgot about it and sent me great residents. You might not think so, but the residents already think of you as a member of Lancel Village. Then of course you should have a home. Therefore, the other day we built you a house. No matter where the wind takes you, we hope you won’t forget about Lancel Village. Think of this as an intermediate compensation for your previous efforts.”

When Galen handed him the keys, an information window popped up.

A cabin was registered under Ark’s name.

A player can own a variety of homes in New World. A player who possesses housing can qualify for a share in the village. The house can also have special options depending on its shape, size and affinity.

<Current House Rating: Grade 8 cabin>

\* When resting inside the house, Health and Mana Regeneration +1000%

\* When you rest for more than 1 hour at the house, for 2 hours Stamina and Mental Power +10%.\*Small personal safe (It is possible to keep as many items as the player's bag size.)

Ark looked around the spacious room with a puzzled face. Of course he knew that users could own houses in New World. But it was tough to obtain a house whether in the game or in reality. If someone wanted to buy a house in a village, there would have to have enormous intimacy with the mayor or Lord of the village. In addition, if the fame was low then it wasn't possible to buy a house even with high intimacy points. But was that all? A user could only qualify to buy a house after an enormous tax. If there wasn't a house for sale then they would have to wait until one became available, and then it would be sold for a premium price. Eventually, the money spent on a house was more than 6000 gold! If it was a commercial development in a city or a mansion, then the house prices would increase exponentially. Still, there were quite a lot of houses sold in New World. A house would provide various buffs as well as item storage, and if additional safes was bought from a store then the storage would increase. Not paying money to rent a warehouse from the Merchant Guild was every merchants dream. It wasn't strange if the speculative frenzy blew over. But he got such a house for free. Of course, it was a small village in the mountains but.....

In fact, Ark wasn't very interested in a house. He felt like a house was unnecessary since he would always be hunting in new areas and didn't want

to travel back to the house. Then why did he feel a sense of affection for his house in Lancel Village?

‘The people seemed to have tied a weight to my neck with this house preparation.’

Although his rented room in reality was shabby, it was a place where he felt comfortable. His desire to complete Galen’s quest quickly rose.

“Even though people would murder for a house, I got one just like that. I got a house even though only half of the quest is completed.....Once the quest is complete then the reward is worth looking forward to!’

“Thank you. I will use it often.”

Ark thanked Galen.

‘That’s it. I was planning to concentrate on hunting in this area anyway.’

So for now, Ark was residing in his new home.

‘Levelling up is the most urgent business.’

While he was in the Evil Silrion, his skills gained lots of experience. But the experience was only half of the growth. This was a game no matter how outstanding the skills. In order to apply those skills to battle, it should be supported by his level. In fact, so far he had only chased after quests. It could be admitted that he had neglected to raise his levels in the early stages of the game. Although it was good to level up and quest, there was no guarantee that his quest wouldn’t lead him to an area out of his league. And one of the basics of online gaming was grinding!

‘I have to reach level 150 to continue Magaro’s quest. I have a house. In the meantime, I should hunt around here and raise my levels and skills!’

Of course, he wasn’t planning to hunt blindly. Even if he was heading towards bare ground, Ark had no intention of leaving empty handed.

‘Now I have to accomplish two tasks.’

The first was looking for a ‘Sacred Soil.’ When he arrived in Lancel Village, Ark received an unexpected call. Popo who had barely spoken in the meantime, vibrated and began to talk. No, to be more precise it was Popo’s mother, Yggdrasil from the Underground World talking.

-Ark, I guess it’s time.

“Yes? What do you mean?”

-Popo is in the seed state. The seeds should be planted in the ground at some point and grow branches. Because Popo wanted to see the world with you, I protected him with my own power but I can’t do that forever.”

It was the reason that Popo had become silent a while ago. Ark felt a sense of remorse as he listened to Popo’s words.

“I have to plant Popo in a specific place?”

-Yes, because he is my alter ego he needs to grow some buds. If you plant him anywhere, he would absorb all the power from the earth and the area would become a wasteland.

“Then where should I plant him?”

I know through Popo that you two are in the Argus Mountains. The land forces that have strong presences like the Argus Mountains would have sacred soil from ancient times. The soil will provide Yggdrasil with the strength to grow. Please look for the Sacred Soil for Popo.

### Sacred Soil

In order for the seeds of Yggdrasil to bud properly, the power of a strong earth is necessary. Only the mighty mountains like the Argus Mountains or the Brandt Mountains have the power necessary so you should seek the Sacred Soil there.

<Difficulty: ->

‘It is better to hunt when there is a definite goal.’

Ark willingly accepted the quest. It was a chance for him to explore the mountains. Once Ark accepted the quest, he took out a thick book and laid it out on the table. It was a copy of the Monster Book and Plant Encyclopedia that he requested from Shannen when he received the quest. Before he left Selebrid, he had dropped in at the Magic Institute to leave a note for Sid and copied the book. But it was not for free. The production cost of copying was 30 gold, but Ark paid for it with faded tears. Because he judged that it was worth it.

“Now, let’s see.....Recipe information!”

‘Slime’s Immortality Pill ‘ Recipe

Essence of Glowing Slime Jelly 1/1

Unicorn horns 0/1

Corrupted Fairy Wings 0/100

The roots of a Mandragora that has received moonlight 0/100

Tooth of a hook bat 0/1000

It was a recipe that he had accidentally discovered while using survival cooking. After looking though the information listed in the Monster Book and Plant Encyclopedia, he determined that most of the ingredients were available in the Argus Mountains. Another reason why Ark went to Lancel Village was to gather the ingredients. Because he had to explore every corner of the Argus Mountains anyway, Ark accepted the <Sacred Soil> quest.

‘Levelling up and questing, while finding everything for the Slime Inner Edge recipe!’

“Let’s see. The ingredient that I need most at the moment is the ‘Tooth of a

Hook Bat' and 'The Roots of a Mandragora that has received moonlight'. This says that many hook bats are inhabiting a cave at the base of the Argus Mountains to the east. And the Mandragora.....it was distributed all over the Argus Mountains. 'Because it'll take a lot of time, I should move to the east while looking for it.'

Ark decided to head straight to the hunting grounds. It was because it was tough staying in the same village with Roco, Jana and Sarah. Anyway, it was time for special hunting. Searching for ingredients and levelling up while questing! It had been a long time since Ark didn't have to worry about any unnecessary things and just concentrate on hunting. As expected, the true charm of online gaming was hunting!

'Relax the mind while keeping the arm comfortable!'

"Master, we can hunt comfortably without worrisome thoughts for a long time!"

Clack clack clack! Clack clack clack!

Since they haven't been able to hunt for a long time, Deimos and Dedric also felt quite cheerful. This feeling. With his summons by his sides, Ark was dedicated to hunting in this area. It was Ark's game style, the Dark Walker. The Argus Mountains was a huge area between Jackson and Giran. There were a lot of virgin territories that users haven't explored yet. Since monsters of various levels were mixed together, it wasn't an easy area for a beginner to carelessly hunt in. In addition, as their levels increased then users would've already left Giran for Selebrid. There was no reason to go into the Argus Mountains to search for high level monsters. However, with the Monster Book then Ark was able to find the necessary prey.

"Woooooo!"

When he entered the eastern mountains, a crowd of steel maned beasts welcomed him. They were recorded in the Monster Book as level 100

monsters.

“They are suitable prey to hunt. Now, go! Dedric, Deimos!”

“Hahaha! It has been a long time, you dog head!”

Clack clack clack!

As his two summons went forward, Ark drew his sword and rushed after them. It was the sound that signalled grinding had started.

## **Grinding**

Jijik, jijik!

He took one step forward into the vicinity of the fire, which flashed to reveal red eyes. There was a scraping sound on the ground as well as the sound of flapping wings.....he felt a sense of something gathering above his head. The peculiar smell of the beast drifted to his nose.

‘They are really flocking endlessly.’

“Eyes of the Cat!”

Ark’s pupils changed to that of a cat. When he used the skill, the darkness cleared up and showed a surprising scene. It was a huge gaping cave. Inside the damp cave, there were an extraordinary amount of black forms with red pupils that were all focuses on Ark. They looked similar to humans at first glance. However, they were clearly not human. A sharp canine was revealed every time they opened their mouths. Their sharp nails scratched at the ground. Long arms were bent in strange angles from the shoulders. But more than anything, there was strange parts attached from their wrist to ankle. When they spread their arms, a thin film appeared and they flew into the sky. A bat! That’s right. The identity of those guys was a bat, a hook bat.

‘The first time I saw that form, I thought I would have a heart attack.’

While looking for the hook bat, Ark had entered the eastern region of the Argus Mountains several days ago. In the evening, he had been defeating random monsters and wandering the woods. He found a person sitting on a hill. He had a form which appeared to be around 10 years old. The boy sat in the chilly weather with his head buried in his cloak and didn’t move for a while.

‘Are there people in the mountains?’

Ark approached the hill quickly. The Argus Mountains were infested with all sorts of monsters. The NPC was a boy sitting in this place alone. He assumed that something was wrong. And the chances of the NPC leading to a quest were very high. Of course, Ark spoke in a friendly voice.

“What are you doing in a dangerous place like this?”

But the boy still did not turn his head away from the cloak. At that time, Dedric’s nose twitched and he cried out.

“Master, I’ve sensed something. It smells like blood.”

“You shouldn’t sleep in a place like this.....did you get hurt perhaps?”

Ark approached cautiously and touched the boy’s shoulder. No, the instant he touched him!

“Kiaaaaaaaaak!”

Suddenly the boy turned his body and shrieked. It was a horrifying scream that sounded like a sharp knife was scraping glass! Even though Ark had experienced many things in New World, he almost had a heart attack. The features of the boy were clearly shown. However, it wasn’t a person. With pupils that were only a few centimetres, sharp fangs and wings on the arm, there was no way it was a human. The monster threw the stiff rabbit carcass it was holding in its hand and glared at Ark. It seemed to be having dinner. It was angry about being disturbed but after seeing Ark, it laughed and revealed its fangs. His form fit its dinner specifications.

‘Hook bat? This is a bat? Level.....’

His heart pounded but Ark regained his composure. When he checked with Eyes of the Cat, it was only level 90. In New World there were scary looking monsters, but no matter what they looked like their level was low. Ark was level 127. With his darkness attribute bonus, he was level 177 and the only weapon the level 90 monster had was its teeth. In other words, it was similar to a mosquito trying to eat its favourite food.

‘Impertinent guy, you’re only a level 90 monster yet you’re trying to eat me for dinner?’

Ark’s pupils became glossy. The following situation didn’t even need to be described. The hook bat was thrown into the pot along with a mixture of spices and the resulting dish surprised Ark.

‘If the hook bat is level 90 then it won’t be so hard to obtain the ingredients.’

After he had dinner, the real hook bat hunting began. However, hunting for hook bats wasn’t as easy as it sounded.

“There is one flying!”

Dedric exclaimed as he pointed towards a black object in the night sky. That was the biggest problem with hunting bats. It was difficult to chase them while they were flying in the sky. If he found a hook bat, he had no long distance attacks so he had no choice but to chase them aimlessly. If they were closer to the ground, then he could pull out his whip and initiate a fight.

“If this continues then I will never finish.”

When thinking about it, Ark became gloomy. In order to make ‘Slime’s Immortality Pill,’ he needed 1000 fangs from the hook bat. But it took a long time just to find one. Not only was it difficult to find one, but he had to chase them around until they descended low enough for him to catch it. In addition, hook bats didn’t drop their fangs every time. If he killed four then only one would drop.

“What is with this inefficient hunting?”

Eventually Ark changed his hunting methods. Ark returned to Lancel Village and bought a bow with tears in his eyes. Because he wasn’t an archer, he couldn’t use all of the offensive power of the bow. While he bought the cheapest bow and arrows, he still wasted 10 gold.

‘I can’t believe I had to waste my money on a bow! I hope it becomes

useful.'

Ark regretted it as soon as the store sold it to him. However, as long as it's not inefficient then it should be fine.

'Yes, I just have to think of it as investing 10 gold!'

Ark picked up the bow and returned to the hunting ground. As soon as Dedric spotted a hook bat, he would shoot arrows straight away.

-Your attack missed!

Because he had no archery skills, the arrows wouldn't hit directly. It was fortunate that once the arrow flew, the hook bats would immediately come down and attack Ark. At least he didn't need to blindly chase them anymore. Even so.....

'Huck huck huck, is the hook bat a monster that doesn't have a lot of numbers?'

Even though he had been hunting for 3~4 hours, he only managed to catch twenty hook bats. He had only found 6 fangs. Furthermore, it was a bat so there would be no activities during the daytime. Was this a prank? Then how would anyone ever manage to collect 1,000 teeth from the hook bat? Of course, he gained experience from hunting monsters while looking for the hook bat but he was annoyed because he couldn't collect the ingredients. It was surprisingly Dedric who gave him a clue to solving the problem.

"Master, there should be a place where they gather."

"What?"

"Although I'm alone because I've been independent from a young age, other bats love to stick together. Except when hunting, there should be one place where they gather."

He was alone because his independence was strong.....since there was no reason to bring up the past, he praised Dedric and asked.

“So where’s the gathering place?”

“Well, I don’t know. But if it is bats then wouldn’t it be a cave?”

Why didn’t Dedric tell him this before? He conveyed through a look in his eyes. This guy who still needed to be hit for pocketing money from the Evil Silrion.....Ark watched him vigilantly, waiting for a chance to discipline him. Anyway, it would become a habit for Dedric if it isn’t corrected now.

‘There is a place where bats are gathered. If so, there is only one way to find out.’

Ark remembered the previous battles against the hook bats. The behaviour patterns of the hook bats were generally similar. After they attacked because of the arrows, once they fell into a critical condition then they would try to fly away. Of course, he knocked them down with the saw blade.....Anyway, a monster that falls into a critical condition and ran away, the intention was obvious. A safe place with colleagues available.

‘Why did I never think of that until now?’

Ark immediately went to find a hook bat. Finally one was picked up by Dedric’s radar. After Ark half killed it, he disarmed himself. There was a risk of it dying thanks to the high sword damage.

‘Huhuhu, should I relieve some of my stress?’

Crunch, crunch, Ark cracked his knuckles and smiled creepily. After he disarmed himself, Ark approached the bat that shrieked and ran towards him. It was a huge mistake. He did a series of straight jabs that seemed like rapid gun fire. The hook bat received three or four punches to the face and staggered, bleeding from the nose. But that was just the beginning. Flying kick! Ark narrowed the distance and struck it in the jaw with his knee. When the hook bat was stunned thanks to the effect of his Sword-Hand Combat, Ark agilely jumped behind it like a cat. He grabbed the waist with both hands and dropped the bat. Since he trained at the NPA gym in boxing, wrestling

and taekwondo, the techniques were connecting together. Although he learned systematically, he couldn't learn a wide variety of skills but Ark accepted that some skills were perfected enough to allow him to live. Every time he used a different technique, he crushed the hook bat's face. However, Ark didn't have any sympathy. He had built up a considerable amount of stress chasing after the bats. Nose ridge, eyes, he choose and only hit the sore spots.....He controlled his power and reduced the damage while inflicting pain. The attack was relentless enough that even Dedric and Deimos flinched watching the brutal attack. In fact, it wasn't simply to relieve stress. Didn't he need to do as much as possible to make it run away to its mum? Eventually, the hook bat fell to a critical condition in 20 seconds.

Jijik, jijijijik! The hook bat spat out curses (?) before flying into the sky.

"Heh, Dedric. Chase it!"

"Yes, sir!"

Dedric remembered the past after seeing Ark's violence. He quickly turned himself into a bat and chased after the hook bat. After 5 minutes. Dedric guided Ark to a hidden dungeon.

A damp bat cave in the Argus Mountains.

You have discovered a wide cave that connects the Argus Mountains. In the dark space, there are flying creatures that flash its red pupils seeking new prey. The intense breathing for blood should tell you what a dangerous place this is. They moment you step one foot in there, you will become their prey.

It was a threatening message that he ignored. As expected, when he entered the cave there was a huge number of hook bats. It was a scene that could be used for the climax of a horror movie, but there would be no grotesque ending. Instead, Ark cheered and drew his sword.

"Hurray, a big profit!"

Ark invaded the dungeon for three days.

“Okay, let’s start. Plan B-2!”

Ark commanded Dedric and Deimos who quickly obeyed. Deimos lifted his shield and stood in front of Ark, blocking him. Using the wall made by Deimos, Ark quickly fired off arrows. He only used it for damage to raise the skill. Ark felt it was necessary to have a long distance attack in case he had to fight any flying monsters. Therefore, he used this time to reduce the rate of the attack missing. Even though he didn’t learn the skill easily, it was necessary to have some ability with it. There were other reasons that he used the bow.

‘I can’t throw away an arrow!’

Ark had thought it would be a lengthy hunt so he bought five hundred arrows. Although it was a low quality, it still cost 10 silver for 100 arrows. 500 arrows was 50 silver. It was a small amount but for Ark who was afraid of spending even 1 copper, it was a huge amount. However, the price of wooden arrows was too cheap to sell back to the store. If he just threw it away then he wouldn’t be able to sleep. He would rather shoot until he developed blisters and learnt one skill. When he shot around 400 arrows, a skill was created.

You have gained a new skill.

Archery (Beginner, Passive): the sound when the arrow feather grazes the rim of your ear has started to become audible. If you continue steadily using the bow and arrow, you will have a benevolent friend during battle. Unfortunately, you don’t have what it takes to gain a deep understanding with the bow.

<Accuracy, Firing Speed +3%, Probability that it will hit +1%>

\* You are able to use the stronger steel arrow.

It was a trivial skill compared to others. That was the substantial penalty as a melee user! Still, there would be situations when having the skill would make

a difference. When he used the skill, there was a 90% chance of 1~2 arrows hitting. When he shot blindly at the level 90 monster using beginner's archery, he only did 10 damage at most.....

"Master, they are nearly gathered!"

Dedric stepped on a hook bat and yelled. There was another reason he was using the bows and arrows. The size of the interior of the cave was enormous, so unless a hook book came closely enough to be seen it wasn't easy to attack. Therefore, Ark pulled the hook bats with the arrows and Dedric.

"Alright! Deimos, use a defensive stance to protect the back!"

Clack clack clack!

Ark packed the bow and drew out his sword.

Putt putt peng!

The hook bats came three or four at a time. The hook bats came flocking as a group. Soon, there were at least twenty to fifty gathered. When the difference between them was 70 levels, the situation was different. He could just enter the cave and deal with a few hook bats, but then he would have to repeat it a lot of times so he found a cheat to fulfil his goal. His strategy to deal with a lot of numbers was to use Deimos as a defensive shield at the rear while Dedric dealt with the sky.

Seusak, jjeojeong, tutung!

He accurately predicted that the hook bats would gather and attack from different directions. However, the effect of his level appeared immediately. When he was dealing with monsters of the same level, he had to concentrate while attacking to deal a critical hit. However with a 70 level difference, when he closed his eyes and swung his sword there was still a high probability of a critical hit. There was also a high probability of his kicks causing abnormal conditions. On the other hand, he didn't have to pay that much attention to the bat's offensive. Even if it was 50 attacks,

approximately only ten of them would hit and with his high defense it only dealt 30 damage. So even if ten attacks hit, he would only lose 300 health. In this situation, his health was more than 2000 points and his defensive strength was also considerable. It was because of this that level was the absolute factor in games. Even if someone had a level 10 rare armour, the defense of a level 100 general item would be much higher. Therefore, no matter how good the item, it was difficult to win against a higher level user. Of course, Ark didn't quietly accept being attacked.

'Those three are attacking on the right! These two from below!'

When the hook bat attacked with claws and toenails, a red line of attack was drawn around Ark. It would flash very briefly, but he used it to grasp the timing of the attack and use evasive measures. It was the ability to know the enemy's attacks in advance. Last time, he gained additional effects for 'Eyes of the Cat' when it reached the advanced level.

Eyes of the Cat (Advanced, Active): Eyes of the Cat has reached advanced level and you are now able to determine even more information and weaknesses of the enemy. The advanced level also has an additional bonus where if you face the same enemy multiple times, you will be able to understand their style completely and see their attacks in advance.

<For 5 minutes + Night Vision, + Life Detection, + Weak Point Discovery, + Double Critical Chance and Mana Consumption: 100>

\* Line designation: You're ability to identify the weaknesses of the opponent has become sharper after training, and after a period of time you will be able to read their movements. If you are dealing with the same enemy multiple times, there is a 5% increase every 100 opponents of predicting the trajectory of the attack. However, the maximum value cannot exceed 70%.

When this technique was used for the first time, it wasn't that significant. But 5% increase every 100 opponents. This meant that for every 100 opponents that he attacked, there would be a 5% increase in the probability of the

trajectory showing. His movements were already better than expected. However when he found more than one thousand bats, the situation changed. There was a 50% chance to show the trajectory of the attack beforehand. With his general evasion before, no matter how good he was he still received slight damage. But with Line Designation, he could avoid attacks 100% while also causing damage. When the probability went up to 50%, he could ignore the attacks completely. It was also much easier to counterattack if he knew the attack trajectory beforehand.

‘Counter attack!’

Ark avoided the attack of the hook bat and quickly swung his sword. With a heavy echo, the hook bat was split in half.

‘It definitely has a different feeling from before!’

Ark knocked down the leading hook bats and shouted.

“Deimos, Dedric! Plan A-4!”

Deimos and Dedric split to the left and right and gathered the hook bats to one place.

“Hehehe, those dull guys. They think they could catch me with those skills? I’ll show them. The body in graceful flight!”

Dedric didn’t have high health compared to his other stats. However, his evasion techniques were outstanding because of his tricky character! He avoided the offensive of the bats using skill and dexterity and lured them. On the other hand, Deimos didn’t have Dedric’s speed or cunning but his strength and stamina were high.

Clack clack clack!

Deimos pushed the hook bat using the force of his shield. His two pets were like heaven and earth, but when they united together it was wonderful. When they pushed the bats to a dead end, Ark’s eyes started glittering.

“Now Snake, sword!”

Ssak ssak ssak!

As soon as Ark grasped the sword, he stepped forward and shouted.

“Blade storm!”

The sword was crushed to pieces and wound around the hook bats like a storm. The power was concentrated on the forty hook bats and they started to fall at a tremendous rate. The black debris spun like a whirlwind while dealing damage. Since the damage wasn’t focused on one bat, Blade Storm dealt around 40% damage to the health. The hook bats that had already lost a lot of health were shredded to pieces.

“Okay, let’s go while it is still hot! Deimos, transform! Snake, create your deadly poison.

Deimos quickly turned into a sword that was stuck in the ground. When he drew it, Ark timed it to coincide with Snake applying poison. All the preparations were ready. The blade moved like a whip and all the hook bats were struck and bound together. This was the system that Ark used to hunt hook bats. Honestly, even if his health was double what it was, he wouldn’t have been able to deal with fifty level 90 monsters. His defense was high, but he wasn’t a warrior that could deal with a lot of opponents. It also wasn’t possible to avoid all 50 attacks. If he didn’t concentrate when fighting, there would be a lot of times when his health became really low. Therefore, Ark created a strategy to deal with a lot of enemies. Block the first offensive while driving them to a dead end. The ensuing Blade Storm would do a lot of damage then he would attack multiple enemies at the same time with his whip blade. He dealt damage to around a dozen of them every time he swung his whip. Combined with Blade Storm, they weren’t able to escape injury.

“Where are you trying to crawl to? Just die gently!”

If one or two managed to escape, Dedric would use Dark Dash to attack

them. Therefore, the hook bats were split in two every time he swung the saw blade.

“The finishing touch. Blade Storm!”

Ark used Blade Storm again the moment it was convenient. The whirling sword debris again! Thirty hook bats died in an instant.

Your level has risen.

After he dealt with fifty hook bats, his level rose. Experience was the essence of hunting!

‘Huhuhu, it is better to sweep experience from a group.’

He gathered dozens of monsters together to hunt them at the same time. Normally, it was a method that was monopolized by magicians that could use large area of effect magic. While they had a disadvantage in PVP, the reason that users would select magicians despite their low defense was because of this. Once they’ve experience the pleasure, it was impossible for them to return to hunting as warriors. However, Ark managed to hunt this way using the combination of Blade Storm and his whip blade. The result was unimaginable!

‘My level is rising at a speed comparable to when I led the raccoon troops in the Underground World!’

He couldn’t understand why users would hunt the other way.

“Good work. The outcome of this battle is announced.”

“Aigoo, my joints and sinews. Every time I fight, my whole body starts throbbing. But I have to put up with it. Because it is Master’s will. I’ll work hard.”

Dedric studied his face and flattered him with many compliments. After the cave was found, Ark began to slowly discipline his summons again. He

brought back the system where the worst performer would be feed his cooking, depending on the battle results. But in fact, it was just a pretext to feed food to Dedric.

‘Deimos can occasionally raise his stats through bone collecting. But Dedric has no other way except through food. Now that he has become impertinent, I’ll make sure to keep on testing new food on him.’

Therefore, Ark kept feeding his cooking to Dedric. Thanks to that he learnt new dishes, Dedric stopped his bad habit and raised his stats.....there was a triple effect. But as it wasn’t too urgent, he framed it as punishing the unskilful one. If he showed that he was punishing him too blatantly, Dedric’s insubordination would only get worse.

‘When Dedric’s ability reaches Deimos again, I’ll make sure to feed them appropriately depending on the situation.’

In the meantime, Ark who had raised his summons to level 90 was a little comfortable.

“The both of you have done well this time. You may rest comfortably.”

Clack clack clack! Clack clack clack clack!

“Hehehe, as expected from the Master who I look up to.”

“Don’t play around and make sure to recover your health. Snake, pick up the items.”

Ssak ssak ssak!

Snake crawled to the ground and began to eagerly pick up the loot.

-Snake has acquired ‘Teeth of the Hook Bat.’

There was a pile of japtem where the fifty bat hooks were killed. There was the flesh of the hook bat that could be used as meat as well as leather that could be used as material.....A number of magic items had also

dropped. Since they were level 90 monsters, the items dropped were around level 70~80 but those items were actually more popular at the auction site. This was because the average level of users in New World was currently around level 60~80.

-Snake has acquired ‘Heavy Iron Sword.’

Heavy Iron Sword (Magic)

Weapon type: Two-Handed Sword

Durability: 30/45

Attack: 17~23

Weight: 40

User restriction: Level 80 or higher with Warrior profession A sword made by smelting precious metal and iron. This is one the mass-produced goods produced at the smithy that is most popular among warriors. However, sometimes the mass-produced goods can produce a masterpiece. These swords perform better than the mass-produced goods and can sometimes have special options.

<Option: Attack Speed +10%, Strength +7>

The hook bats gave more than expected.

‘It is quite useable? 800,000.....no, I can get 1 million won for it!’

Ark absent-mindedly packed the Heavy Iron Sword into his bag. However, at the moment Ark need the teeth from the hook bat to create his ‘Slime’s Immortality Pill.’ But even when Snake searched every corner, only 13 had dropped.

“Sheesh, the drop rate for it is really low.”

Many days passed where he only slept for 3 hours and minimized the break

time in the game while only concentrating on hunting. He hunted as many as 5,000 hook bats! He had to return to Lancel Village countless times to sell the japtem. Meanwhile, Ark had risen 15 levels and he was now level 142. And 13 of those levels were from the hook bats in the cave. It was the result of using Blade Storm in succession while group hunting. Yet he had still only collected 950 teeth from the hook bats.

“50 more.....That means I have to hunt approximately seven hundred more? I’m sick of hunting bats so if I hurry, I might be able to finish it today.”

Ark continued hunting without any breaks.

“It has completely become rags.”

When he looked carefully at his armour, there was only 20 durability left. Every time he met a large number of enemies, his armour became tattered. Ark used Magic Restoration to repair his equipment neatly. Magic Restoration was not an advanced magic that made it possible for him to repair items without losing durability. When he needed to repair the Guardian Armour of the Merpeople, he no longer required the repair box.

‘The side effect of the skill rise is terrific.’

When his armour was beautifully repaired, the importance of the skill was once again seen. Ark repaired his equipment and recovered his health before entering the cave again. When visiting the cave, he discovered a cave that was much larger than it seemed from the outside. The mountains seemed to be split as there was a gap with cliffs on both sides. It meant that when he looked up, the sky would occasionally appear. The place was incredibly crowded with hook bats along the rock wall, so Ark had to come up with a new plan.

‘I’ve come this far into the dungeon.’

He might as well go to the end of the dungeon.

‘Who knows? There might also be a treasure chest?’

Ark fought with the hook bats before heading deeper. How far did he go? All of a sudden, the cave became really narrow before widening into something spacious. There was a stone pillar with fangs hanging from it!

‘Is this the end of the cave?’

Ark looked around and walked along the wall.

Kkiiing.....

Then a strange sound rang abruptly from in front of him. It echoed around like a tuning fork. Ark reflexively looked in the direction the sound was coming from. There was a huge object hanging down from the ceiling. It was a huge black lump hanging, which made Ark feel anxious as he kept on watching it. The object suddenly twitched and revealed red eyes. As his gaze met those eyes, he felt out of breath.

‘Huck! That, that is.....a hook bat?’

“Kkieeeek!”

At the same time, the object shrieked and opened both wings. It was a huge hook bat that was at least 20 metres.

-The boss monster ‘Terrifying Cave Grimwing’ has appeared!

It wasn’t a treasure chest waiting at the end but a boss monster.

‘Sheesh, I never thought there would be a boss monster in a place like this!’

The figure flew down and shot like an arrow towards Ark. Ark rolled on the ground to avoid the attack before wielding his sword. However, Grimwing immediately opened its wings and hit the brakes before turning around. His back received damage.

-You have received a critical hit from Grimwing. 400 damage!

‘Is this a joke?’

“Deimos, use your defense posture to protect the rear. Dedric, disturb that guy so he can’t fly around selfishly!”

Deimos held his shield and stayed behind Ark. Dedric used Dark Dash to move around Grimwing. Thanks to his pets, Ark had room to recover. He was already tired of dealing with the disgusting hook bats. Even though it was huge, it was still a hook bat. Since it was an opponent that he had fought to some degree before, Ark calmly moved his summons around.

Counter attack!

Ark dealt damage while Dedric drove the Grimwing around. Grimwing was a monster with a peculiar ability to counterattack agilely, however Deimos received half of the attacks thanks to his defense stance. After 5 minutes of fighting, Grimwing had lost 30% of its health. Ark had lost 40% of his health but as he became used to Grimwing’s movements, that gradually decreased.

‘Okay, it was a little bit embarrassing at first but I can beat this monster!’

But it was still too early to be convinced of his victory. Grimwing suddenly flew upwards and shrieked. Something similar to a shock wave that wasn’t visible swept Ark and his summons away. Ark flinched but received no damage. However.....

“Eh? Deimos? Dedric? What are you doing?”

Ark looked dumbly at his pets. Clack clack, clack clack clack! All of a sudden, Deimos ran to a dark space. In front of him, an absurd golden bone was floating. Since the golden bone showed up, Deimos couldn’t hear or even seen Ark. He just stared with spellbound eyes as he chased after the golden bone. Dedric was also not in a normal state.

“These children, I’ll kill you all! Come back!”

Dedric chased after the bats in front of him cursing while using Dark Dash.

However, the bats avoided Dedric while teasing him. They were probably the bats that had rejected Dedric in the Netherworld. Golden bones and bats..... With a flash, Ark realized what was happening.

‘These things can’t just suddenly show up in the cave. If so, this is.....Hallucinations!’

The shockwave that Grimwing blew!

The shock wave caused hallucinations instead of damage. However, Ark was a Dark Walker and had a 50% resistance to darkness, fear, confusion and seduction spells. Thanks to that he managed to avoid the hallucinations, but Dedric and Deimos were caught by it. After the two acted separately, Ark became naked.

“Kikikiki!”

Grimwing burst into laughter while threatening him by revealing its fangs. Then he was battered with attacks from every direction! In an instant, his health quickly decreased. Ark tried to counterattack but even though Grimwing was 20 metres big, it was as quick as a squirrel. Once he gave a critical hit, he quickly soared into the sky. Rapid acceleration and braking. Although only those two moves were repeated, Ark couldn’t get the timing right for a counterattack.

‘Damn, rapid acceleration and braking is one of the basics of boxing.....’

Since he practiced boxing at the gym, he shouldn’t be this helpless. Ark tried to shoot an arrow, but it didn’t show any effect since it was only beginner’s archery.

‘If this happens then I must rely on a plan of desperation!’

Ark ground his teeth together and tried to rush towards Grimwing. He tried to guess the timing and swung his sword, but Grimwing easily avoided it by braking. And the moment it brandished its claw, Ark ran up to it. His chest tingled from the damage, but Ark just hugged the ankle tightly.

‘Try to attack me when I’m holding on to you like this!’

The wrestling he learned was not in vain. Even though Grimwing flew all over the place, Ark held on firmly and did not fall. Even though he couldn’t use his sword in that position, he could still inflict damage.

‘That’s it, now you’re screwed! Cough!’

Bang bang double bang!

It was at that time. Grimwing actually rushed into the wall.

‘This ignorant child!’

The wall shook and rocks began to fall. After Grimwing slammed into the wall, it lost 20% of its health while Ark fell into a critical condition. It was a crisis! Ark immediately got up and prepared for Grimwing’s offensive. However, there was no expected attack.

“Ara? What’s with that guy?”

“Kieek! Kiek!”

However, this time Grimwing swept its arm in the wrong place.

‘I don’t understand but this is a chance. I’ll withdraw!’

Ark grabbed Deimos’ collar and hid in a narrow entrance. Dedric also came back to him after he cancelled the summoning. Ark was saved from the crisis by drinking a potion that restored 50% of his health. At that time, Deimos even woke up from the hallucination. Deimos looked around restlessly and became sulky when he saw that there was no golden bone. Well, he knew that Deimos was crazy about bones.....

‘Grimwing is stronger than I thought. Somehow I think it is possible to win if I have my summons.....if only there was no way to have the hallucinations affect them. What will I do? Should I just give up and find a way to escape? But it won’t be easy to run away.....’

Ark was worried until he suddenly tilted his head to one side.

‘Wait a moment. Why did that guy miss a while ago? The rocks falling caused a lot of dust to rise, but was it to the extent that it couldn’t see me?’

There was suddenly a flash in Ark’s mind.

‘Dirt? No! It wasn’t because of the dirt that it couldn’t find me! It was because of the rocks falling! That’s right, why didn’t I think of that? There was an echo when I first came in. That was how Grimwing could see. It used its hearing to see just like a real bat. Just like the sonar of a submarine, it used supersonic waves to read my location.’

Ark’s firm belief in victory showed in his eyes.

‘That is its weakness! If I use it then I can beat it!’

Ark thought frantically. After he visualized a manoeuvre, Ark immediately summoned Dedric.

“This child, I won’t leave it at that!”

Dedric caught Ark’s collar as soon as he was summoned. He was still wandering in the hallucination.

“.....Do you want to die?”

“Huck! M-Master?”

When Ark stared at him, Dedric was surprised and immediately removed his hand.

“Ah, no. This is just.....I was mad at those fellows before.....”

“That’s enough. Shut up and listen well.”

“Grrr!”

Grimwing’s red eyes wandered around the cave. After it lost Ark’s trace, it used the supersonic waves many times but couldn’t find where Ark was hiding. However, he hadn’t fully escaped. Ark was clearly somewhere. That was what its wild animal instincts was telling it. Therefore, it held its breath and explored the cave. Suddenly, Ark ran out of a small cave. He came from behind, but the ultrasound monitored in a square around the wings. Grimwing kicked upwards and rushed towards Ark. However, Ark was different from before just ran around without fighting. Grimwing chased him for a while before letting out a roar of fury.

“Kkieeeek!”

An intense shock wave went through Ark. Then Ark fell to the ground. Grimwing smiled in satisfaction before it jumped. At the moment that Ark fell, his body divided into two.

“.....?”

Was its shockwave that strong? Deception was a phenomenon that it couldn’t understand. However, Grimwing soon realized that it was deceived. The body suddenly jumped up and ran around shouting.

“Is this a wild goose chase? If I’m caught this time then I’m dead!”

It wasn’t Ark’s voice. It sounded like the voice of a clamouring bat. When Grimwing used its supersonic continuously, it detected two objects moving on the ceiling.

“It’s too late, Dark Blade!”

There was a roaring sound about its head and all the images started distorting. That’s right, the person above Grimwing’s head was Ark! This was the details of Ark’s plan. Grimwing couldn’t see the opponent with its eyes.

The most that it could figure out with the supersonic was the size and silhouette of the opponent. That was when Ark came up with an idea to use it to his advantage. When Dedric wore a big armour, he was similar in size and shape to Ark. The foundation of his plan was to make Grimwing confuse Dedric for Ark! While Grimwing was focused on Dedric, Ark and Deimos would climb up the wall to the ceiling. Then Dedric would lure the target.....and he would use Dark Blade while hanging from the ceiling. He calculated the spots where the sharp stalactite would fall.

Kukukung, chwaak!

The stalactite tore through Grimwing's wings like it was paper.

"Now, isn't this more fair? Try to figure out where I am!"

Ark swung his sword vertically while jumping down towards Grimwing. Grimwing let out a roar of anger. Then, Deimos swung his sword with strength towards the ceiling. The power wasn't enough to drop the stalactite like Ark's was. However, the small stone fragments that fell like hail was excellent. The countless noises were fatal for Grimwing's ability to hear and grasp the location of the opponent. When Grimwing tried to swing its wings, the accuracy fell and it kept on hitting the wall. At the same time, Ark landed on Grimwing's neck and dealt multiple critical hits. The ensuing battle followed Ark's pace. Grimwing couldn't fly thanks to its torn wings and it couldn't see because Deimos kept on making the small rocks fall. Grimwing tried to aim the hallucination shockwave towards Deimos a few times but could not see Ark.

"Riposte!"

Ark used Riposte every time Grimwing opened its wings. Of course the shockwave flew to the wrong place.

'Heh, wings and ultrasound, when those two are sealed then it is easy.'

But he still had to be careful even if it was like a lion trying to catch a rabbit.

A blind man with his eyes opened by oriental medicine was a powerful opponent. Ark attacked carefully and steadily reduced its health. At that time there was an unexpected development.

“These children, I’m going to kill you!”

Dedric had been hit by the hallucinations and frantically rushed towards Grimwing. Then Grimwing’s eyes flashed and it grabbed Dedric and bit into his neck. Was Grimwing trying to restore its health by sucking it from Dedric?

‘Vampire! That’s right, wouldn’t a hook bat be a vampire bat? Sheesh, I have to release the summon.....’

Ark regretted it belatedly and tried to release the summon.

“Ugh! This child, did it ask? It asked right? Doesn’t it know that I also have fangs?”

Dedric cursed and bit Grimwing in the neck. As soon as they both bit each other, Grimwing’s health recovery stopped. He didn’t know what was happening but it was a chance!

“Okay, Dedric. Keep on biting! Dark Blade!”

The light from the sword split through the darkness! When Dark Blade hit Grimwing, its health quickly decreased. After the 3rd shot hit its neck, its body trembled and it collapsed to the ground.

“I won!”

-Your level has risen!

-Your level has risen.....

Grimwing gave quite a lot of experience compared to its level. The message

quickly popped up and he gained 4 levels. However unlike his expectations, the only items that dropped were a ring and a wing.

### [Grimwing's Wing (Special)]

The wings of a bat made huge through mutation.

The purpose is unclear, but it is obviously a rare item.

If might become useful later on.....]

### Mind's Eye (Rare)

Item type: Ring

User restriction: Level 120

Grimwing's 3rd eye. When connected to a suitable form, it seems possible to wear it on a finger. Grimwing lived only in the darkness and its vision deteriorated over time. The reason that it was able to find its opponent was through supersonic, using its third eye. Although the body has disappeared, this ring might be able to show the same ability if supplied with a suitable magic.

<Option: It is possible to use Mind's Eye.>

\*Mind's Eye: When using Mind's Eye, you will gain the ability to see in the darkness for 1 minute. This has nothing to do with eyesight, so the ability isn't affected by sight restriction magic such as 'Stealth' or 'Darkness.' In addition, you will be able to easily discover the location of traps on all terrains.

Mana consumption: 50

'A rare ring! Although it doesn't raise the stats, an additional skill is added as an option!'

The ability to see in the darkness was not necessary. However, it is a different story if it is not influenced by darkness magic. While Ark could use Eyes of the Cat to maximize his sight, it was vulnerable to darkness magic. So in the Evil Silrion, there were a lot of times where he was forced into a corner because the opponent used a skill that had an effect on his vision. It also allowed him to see the location of traps. Of course if he had time then he would be able to find the location of the traps, but there was no time to search in the confusing fight against Duke. The only disagreeable thing was that it looked too evil. He had to insert the disgusting eye onto his finger to observe the surroundings.

‘Well, that’s it. Even though it looks like that, it is a rare ring. Because warriors would like it, it is possible to receive a high price for it. I found it accidentally but it is a good profit for a dungeon. After recovering, I’ll go and collect the remainder of the ingredients.’

Ark sat down to restore his health and took out his pot. Then Dedric appeared with a bemused expression. The hallucination didn’t seem to have broken yet as Dedric tilted his head from side to side while approaching Gurimwing’s corpse. He bit it again before raising his voice like Columbus discovering a new continent.

“Yes, I am a vampire!”

What did he suddenly announce? This goofball?

“What are you talking about? Didn’t you know that already?”

“That’s not right! Look, look, I can bite!”

“Well of course you’re a vampire.....”

Ark murmured as he moved forward. Yes, why didn’t he think it was strange until now? Dedric was a vampire. At first, he was only a vampire bat but then he evolved to the vampire Dedric. Naturally, he should gain the special ability of a vampire! Even if he was a vampire, it made sense that he would

have a bloodsucking ability. Then why was Dedric making such a fuss with his words.....? At that time, a new message window popped up in front of Ark.

Your pet ‘Dedric’ has manifested the power of the vampire.

Dedric who had suddenly evolved from a bat was unaware that he was a vampire. Therefore, most of the special capabilities of a vampire were sealed. However once he was bitten by Grimwing, he obtained a vampire’s instincts. Usually vampires are known to absorb their opponent’s strength and power. As he was a bat that was promoted to a vampire and just acquired the ability, it isn’t possible to show 100% of the vampire’s special characteristics. The ability to use it only shows up at specific times.

\* Dedric has formed 1 skill slot.

\* Vampirism: Suck the blood of a specific person to absorb skills.

<If the vampire succeeds, one random skill from the opponent can be stored in the skill slot. The absorbed skill can only be used once. If a new skill is absorbed than the one previously saved in the skill slot is automatically deleted.>

\*Current absorbed skill: <Confusing Supersonic Wave> For 20 seconds, all opponents within a 20 metre radius will become confused. If the power to resist confusion is below 50%, there is an 80% chance of being confused.

‘Dedric has such a skill?’

Although it was random, he could absorb one skill from the opponent and use it.

Therefore, it was possible to exert a tremendous effect. On the other hand, Dedric wouldn’t stop cheering over Grimwing’s body.

“Hahaha, that’s right. I’m a noble vampire from the Netherworld! I have discovered the importance of my existence!”

## **Legend of the Unicorn**

“Is there really no way?”

“Of course not.”

The magician replied. For more than 10 minutes, the magician didn’t bother blinking. Ark looked at the bag lying on the table with pained eyes. It was the second material required for ‘Slime’s Immortality Pill.’ It was the ‘Corrupted Fairy Wings.’ After he had finished collecting all the teeth of the hook bat, he wandered around the Argus Mountains looking for the corrupted fairy wings. The Monster Book had written that they were very rarely found in the Argus Mountains. However, he couldn’t find it even after a few days. After going around hunting monsters for a few days, Ark accidentally discovered information about the corrupted fairy wings.

“The corrupted fairy wings? Let’s see? Well I don’t know what to say. Oh, you should go see the magician Madusein. He might know.”

“Madusein?”

“He is a magician that moved here before it became empty. He has a store that sells magic ingredients near the village entrance. The store is arranged in such a way that merchants have difficulty travelling there.....I can’t understand that friend at all.”

Galen had introduced him to the magic ingredients store. Madusein was a grey haired magician. He didn’t set up the store to make money, but as a quiet place to work when settlers came to Lancel Village. Anyway, he asked Madusein again who laughed and replied.

“It would just head towards the ground. It isn’t easy to obtain the corrupted fairy wings. Every few months, the fairies would have a ceremony where they shed their old bodies and changed into a new one. It is like a snake shedding its skin. Then wings that would fall out are known as the corrupted

fairy wings.”

“Then it would just fall onto the ground?”

“That’s right. There are quite a few fairies alive in the Argus Mountains.”

“Thank you.”

Ark quickly gave a greeting as he was about to leave.

“Are you going to search the bare ground?”

“Yes?”

“Have you ever seen a fairy? You haven’t seen it? Don’t you find it strange that you’ve been living in the Argus Mountains and haven’t even caught a glimpse of one?”

“That’s right.”

Ark nodded with a confused expression. Come to think of it, there haven’t been many places in the Argus Mountains that he hadn’t explored. However, he never saw any corrupted fairy wings let alone a fairy. Madusein clicked his tongue and continued talking.

“The fairies are different. The fairy can travel between this dimension and other dimensions. It might not even exist in this world. Do you understand? Naturally if the skin falls, it would fall in the other dimension. You will require very special skills to obtain it. Just like me.”

Madusein rummaged through a shelf before putting one bag on the table. It was the ‘Corrupted Fairy Wings.’ His intention was to force Ark who had no ‘special skills’ to obtain it, to buy it from the store. Although he could wander around the mountains looking for it, it might be better to buy it off him. However, Ark became dizzy the moment he heard the price.

“3 gold each. You said you needed 100? Then that would be 300 gold.”

300 gold! The prize money from the Evil Silrion was only 100 gold and the

amount of money he won betting was 100 gold. He had also obtained 100 gold from hunting in the Argus Mountains. It was as if Madusein intentionally named the price of his entire fortune, which made him angry. Then Ark spoke without considering.

“I’ll search for it using my own power.”

“Okay.”

Ark frantically wandered the Argus Mountains after that. But like Madusein said, ‘special skills’ were required. After a couple of days, Ark eventually found himself back in Madusein’s store. Even though he tried to decrease it by even 1 copper, Madusein didn’t budge.

“I heard that you didn’t run this business to make money?”

“It also isn’t good to suffer a loss in merchandise when running a business.”

As expected, it wasn’t easy talking to magicians. Besides, he wasn’t an original native like Galen and was an NPC that had only recently immigrated here. There was no intimacy with him. In the end, Ark had to purchase the ingredients while crying tears of blood.

‘Damn, it isn’t possible to give up after gathering all those fangs.....’

After all the money he invested in the ‘Slime’s Immortality Pill,’ if the item wasn’t worth it then he would die. However, it also made him think again. The ingredients were worth 300 gold. Then of course the stuff would have value. With those expectations, he eventually decided to buy the item.

‘Yes, this is an investment. Anyway, once Sid organizes the items and returns I will have a lot of money again. It isn’t necessary to worry about 300 gold. In order to earn a lot of money, the investment amount has to be big too. It is common sense that a larger investment would mean more profit.’

Ark.....if he didn’t think like that then he wouldn’t have been able to endure it.

‘Anyway, I have the corrupted fairy wings now.....there are only two ingredients left?’

“Information Window”

‘Slime’s Immortality Pill ‘ Recipe

Essence of Glowing Slime Jelly 1/1

Unicorn horns 0/1

Corrupted Fairy Wings 100/100

The roots of a Mandragora that has received moonlight 78/100

Tooth of a hook bat 1000/1000

It took him six days to obtain the tooth of a hook bat. He wasted three days on the corrupted fairy wings and eventually had to spend 300 gold to buy it. The amount of time and money he spent into making this wasn’t a joke. But now it is almost up to the completed stage.

‘I can find the Mandragora herb as I wander the mountain.....’

The Mandragora was a herb only found in the Argus Mountains. In fact, he had also seen the Mandragora when he came to the Argus Mountains in the past. But he didn’t dare to even touch it. Just like the corrupted fairy wings, sometimes special herbs or ingredients required special skills in ingredient foraging. The Red Bee Honey was a high class ingredient where if you didn’t sprinkle it with the mushroom poison antidote first, picking it would be dangerous. The Mandragora was one of those special herbs. The roots of the Mandragora were in the shape of a person, and when it was pulled out from the ground it would let out a horrifying scream. It was a sound that would instantly kill any user or NPC with a 100% probability. When Ark was a beginner, he could only check the texture of the cold ground.

However, Ark soon found a solution. The copy of the ingredient sent by the Magic Institute had details about the scent of the Mandragora. Ark was not a dog. However, he had a number of summons that was like a dog. Ark instructed Deimos to look for the Mandragora from a distance away. As an undead, Deimos was immune to the instant death magic of other monsters! He pulled out the Mandragora without any concerns about its cry. However, he needed the Mandragora that had received light from the moon. Because it could only be picked at night, he was missing a few but that was easily solved with time.

‘The problem is this guy.....’

Ark breathed out a sigh as he read the recipe. The only thing left was the horn of a unicorn. It was in fact the biggest problem. Ark had tried to find the unicorn’s horn first. Because it was different from the other ingredients and only required one, he had tried to put it away quickly. The exact location of the unicorn was even recorded in the Monster Book. It was located at the Moonlight Pond in the northern part of the Argus Mountains. But no matter how hard he looked, he couldn’t even find a trace of the unicorn’s shadow. After a couple of days, he had given up to go hook bat hunting. However, he could no longer put it off.

‘There should be a way to catch it somehow.....’

Ark lived in the area around the Moonlight Pond. But a unicorn still didn’t appear. A whole day passed.

‘Perhaps the Monster Book was wrong?’

What other reason was there for it not appearing. In the end, Ark was attempting to move his seat when the moon rose on the Moonlight Pond.

“Hihihihing!”

Suddenly a cry was heard from the Moonlight Pond. When he flinched and turned around, wasn’t that a white horse running around the pond?

‘It’s a unicorn!’

Ark immediately jumped into the Moonlight Pond. However, when he arrived he only saw the unicorn’s shadow as it ran away. Its caution was enormous. Since then, the same situation was repeated. Ark would hang around the Moonlight Pond until it showed up. Once he was behind it, its form would be seen in the distance. When he attempted to ambush it with his summons, the situation was the same. It was so wary that if there were any signs of a monster, it wouldn’t appear. And its speed was so quick that Dedric couldn’t even catch up with it while flying.

“Unbelievable.”

There was a tight knot in Ark’s stomach. These ingredients were so difficult to collect that sometimes he thought he would die! Now only the last ingredient was left. But if this pattern continued then there would be no way to obtain it. Even if he chased after it for one thousand years, he wouldn’t be able to catch it. After Ark spent one day on it, he eventually wandered back to Lancel Village. He had been hunting while waiting for the unicorn and had a pile of japtem built up.

“Ark-hyungnim, you’re back?”

When he entered the village, the guard NPCs greeted him happily. He knew those people. They were the thieves that had come with Ark. Among them were the thieves who had graduated from the Samcheong College of Education and lost the chaotic alignment. And they had specially trained in a career to help the village.

“Ark-hyungnim. A few days ago we took over the position of village guards with Big Hyung-nim’s permission.”

“Hello? I started working part-time at the general store today. This is the help out the livelihood of the training centre and ease Roco-nuna’s concerns a little bit.”

“I’m employed as the assistant to the carpenter. I’ll extend Hyung-nim’s house later.”

Whenever he visited the village, the thieves were report to him. Thanks to that Ark’s depressed mood became better. These thieves weren’t seeking a new life. The number of thieves that have entered Lancel Village was now 130 people. The atmosphere of the village became lighter and they’re started to fix up the surrounding roads now that there are a lot of people to help. It was the development of a village. It would mean a direct profit for Ark.

‘Okay, okay. Work more diligently. Raise the real estate prices higher.’

Ark smiled warmly at the NPCs running around. The village should develop and become a larger scale. And gain more awareness. The rapid changes would affect the real estate market value. It was natural for prices of houses in liveable towns to rise. If Lancel Village was established as a place with good real estate then merchants would come running with money to buy the houses. Then Ark would sit down and earn money. That wasn’t the only advantage with houses. When the house had been empty for a while, sometimes he would come back to find items.

-Meow Elder Hassan has sent a gift (10 glowing molars)

-Galen the temporary chief of Lancel Village has sent a gift (Southern Speciality Fruit Basket)

Ark received overwhelming support from the NPCs in Lancel Village. When Ark left the house empty, they would often give him gifts like these. The Meow would give leather from the monsters they hunted in the vicinity, the raccoons would leave crafts to decorate the house while sometimes Hanson would provide a map with a new area discovered. A lot of it didn’t cost a lot of money but they were all free items. Ark wasn’t the type that would reject anything free.

‘Huhuhu, what gifts will there be this time?’

Ark excitedly went to his house.

“Oppa!”

Just as he entered the house, he heard Roco’s voice.

“Ara? Roco? How are you here?”

“I haven’t seen Oppa for a while so I stopped by for a moment. Oh, but what kind of house looks like this? The dust on the table.....ghosts would appear. So I decided to do a little bit of cleaning.

Roco held a broom while laughing. He remembered that every time he came home, it had been clean for some reason.....was she trying to take the role of a wife? It is definitely such a shape.

“But why do you look like that? The armour is shabby as well as your face, and did you wash at all?”

“Well it is in the game.....”

“Heung! It is obviously in reality as well. Haven’t you been playing the game for 20 hours every day? You’ve probably haven’t been washing and just eating noodles. Isn’t that right?”

She was completely correct. He played 20 hours a day. When he played for that long it was a pain to do anything else. When at home he would barely wash and he would often eat seaweed rolls in the game unit.

“I still go out for training.”

“That’s because the teacher is severe and you’ll receive hell for not going.”

“That’s it.”

“I don’t care whether it is a game or reality. It is a basic good etiquette to be clean. Other people manage to look good while in the game.....”

Roco continued muttering before closing her mouth. Then she looked around and quickly pulled Ark to the door.

“It is dangerous here for the moment so follow me.”

“What? Dangerous?”

“Shhh, Jana was sleeping on the neighbouring roof just now. And Sarah is helping her father map new areas but if she knows you’re back then it would be troublesome. So come with me quickly!”

Jana, Sarah and Roco were still having a war of nerves to try and maintain a grip on Ark. Anyway, Roco led Ark to a stream nearby.

“Take off your armour. I’ll wash it now. Whether it is a game or reality, a man should always be clean. Ah, and on the weekend I’ll bring a few dishes to the hospital. Unlike New World, you should take a break to eat properly.”

“.....”

After receiving Roco’s embarrassing confession, they’re met a couple of times to eat and watch a movie. It was good up to there. Ark used playing the game as an excuse not to go out for too long. But the aftermath had led to a surprisingly serious situation. Roco had started acting like his wife. But compared to reality, it was much more serious in the game. Particularly in Lancel Village.....maybe she became anxious because of Jana and Sarah actively expressing their affection. However, the bigger issue was that Ark didn’t hate her nagging. After his mother was hospitalized for a few years, there was no one around to nag him. He didn’t know it himself, but it was quite lonely. Therefore, Roco’s nagging sometimes felt quite lovely. And he gradually got used to it.

“Look. That’s a lot better.”

Roco was shaking off the moisture from the leather armour. Unlike reality, in New World there was no need to dry the leather armour. After the laundry was finished, the leather armour looked as good as new. Even if he repaired it using Magic Restoration, it wouldn’t get rid of the dirt. In addition, there was no need to reject the 5% increase in defense for 4 hours buff.

“Thank you.”

Ark wore the armour with an embarrassed expression.

“Oppa, how long will you stay in the village?”

“Why?”

“When you have time will you take a walk with me? I found a place that has a good view of this area. We haven’t been able to meet outside since Oppa has been busy hunting. So it would feel like a short date. Yes? When it comes to Oppa, we can just go to a nearby area and look around.”

Roco asked with eager and sparkling eyes. The landscape of New World was so beautiful that it couldn’t be compared to the real world. It was difficult to look at the mountains from a suburb in Seoul, but New World was different. There were jungles just like the Amazon and thick forests. There were places that haven’t been touched by human hands. The fact that there were monsters waiting also made it more fun for the users..... If a suitable place was found, it wasn’t necessary to take an airplane and fly to a foreign country. Recently, there was the trend of lovers going on dates inside the game. New World was the best environment for lovers to date in. They didn’t need to go away. There were cities with theme parks and a medieval village in the background. There were strange food and no matter how much someone drank, they wouldn’t get a hangover. Dating in New World was so popular, that there were even websites on the Internet that specialized in it. If monsters showed up on the date, the lovers could show off in front of each other and gain a lot of attention. For Ark who lived in the game, Roco came up with this method of dating.

‘It’s not a bad idea to cool my head off a little bit.’

“Okay, I’ll have a quick look around.”

“Hohoho, then follow me. I’ll show you a wonderful place.”

Roco guided him to a place that Ark had visited already. However, it looked

like an entirely different place once he saw it again.

Was this scenery always here?’

When he was hunting, he didn’t pay any attention to the scenery around him.

“How is it? Is it okay? All the rehabilitation brothers have come here before as well. Jjak-tung oppa even said that he would bring his girlfriend here again in the future. Ah, did you know that Jjak-tung oppa had a girlfriend? There is an 11 year age difference between them so I called him a cradle robber.”

Roco stood next to him and babbled in a pleasant voice. However, Ark was already trying to navigate the Andromeda. How could he catch a unicorn? Those were the only thoughts his head was full of.

‘.....that damn horse, should I ask Roco to come and help me take care of it?’

That was the idea that Ark suddenly thought of. The beautiful scenery, woman and unicorn.....the combination reminded him of a fantasy movie he watched when he was a kid.

‘Wait? Unicorn? Wasn’t a unicorn a monster with one horn? And the unicorn I saw was a horse. Speaking of the unicorn.....?’

Ark quickly pulled out the Monster Book.

#### Unicorn Habitat: The Moonlight Pond in the Argus Mountains.

The unicorn is a mysterious animal that crosses dimensions freely. Using its power, it can sometimes cross the dimensions and show its form on our dimension. Although it has a lot of wariness, its nature is good and it likes a righteous person. If someone appears that is the opposite, it would know straight away and never appear. The unicorn’s favourite things are babies and an innocent maiden. In particular, it likes the form of an innocent maiden and is drawn instinctively to her. The unicorn horn has powerful magical effects and is a premium magic ingredient. Thanks to the indiscriminate magicians attempting to capture them, they rarely show their

form on this earth. But there is a rumour that some travellers saw them at the Moonlight Pond in the Argus Mountains.

‘That’s right, as expected.....!’

Ark also remembered similar contents from the movie. The man in the movie sent his innocent daughter as bait to catch the unicorn. Then the unicorn went to sleep in the daughter’s lap and the man attacked it. Of course that was the reason the unicorn didn’t appear for Ark. The unicorn would be wary of an alert man who didn’t even wash when he was dirty.

‘But an innocent maiden.....?’

According to the legend, it would appear at her foot? And there was such a woman right in front of Ark! Ark grasped Roco’s hand and asked.

“Roco! Can you help me out?”

“Yes? What is it?”

“I need your assistance in catching a monster.”

Roco blushed under Ark’s attention and asked.

“Are you certain I can help?”

“Yes, your help is definitely necessary!”

“I understand.”

“However.....”

Ark folded his arms and looked at Roco. When he thought about it, it probably wouldn’t be that simple to catch a unicorn. The woman who summoned the unicorn in the movie wasn’t simply a woman, but one with a lot of charms. Of course he didn’t mean Roco’s appearance. Objectively, Ark would score Roco 8 out of 10 points. Moreover, in New World people could slightly improve their beauty so a lot of them have good looks.

‘Plastic surgery in New World.....that is the problem.....’

The problem was that other female users possessed Roco's beauty through this plastic surgery. In New World, performing artists were considered ordinary. He didn't know what the monster was looking for but as the average appearance in New World was very high, there was no guarantee that it would be tempted. Roco was also lacking a fatal blow. Seduction! Unfortunately, Roco didn't have that. However, Ark didn't consider it impossible.

'Then I guess I have to use that method.'

Ark checked a recipe and made a survival cooking dish.

#### Drink of Bewitchment.

It is a drink that has been created through the refinement of several herbs. Once drunk, a subtle scent of temptation would float from the body. If you have someone from the opposite sex in mind, confess using this chance!

<Increases charm by 300% for 1 hour>

The quiet lake shining in the moonlight. Low and gentle music echoed above the soft sound of the water. Sitting on the shore of the lake with a woman dressed in white playing a harp. It indeed looked like a picturesque and beautiful scene. In addition, half of the fantastic atmosphere was due to make up and lighting while the other half was due to the Drink of Bewitchment.

'Now, she is equipped with everything that a unicorn loves. Come out! You stupid horse!'

Ark was enthusiastically hiding on a hill not too far away. How much time had passed? 10 minutes, 20 minutes.....Roco and Ark were getting a little tired when something approached from the pond. It was a white horse with a sharp horn, the legendary unicorn! Roco jumped at the sudden appearance of the unicorn. Then she smiled gently and began to play the harp again.

‘Okay, good. Incite it just like that!’

Roco who received Ark’s support continued playing calmly. After a while, the vigilant unicorn narrowed the distance. Roco smiled and whispered in a sweet voice.

“Yes, be good. Come on. Aren’t you tired?”

The unicorn seemed to smile and rustled its tail straight away. Was it planning to lie down on Roco’s leg? Ark wondered if a creature that was wary of everything would suddenly change its mind just because of a woman. He wanted to throw away his patience and just run out straight away. But the unicorn was a clever guy. If it ran away while he was approaching it, there was a high chance that he wouldn’t be able to catch it again.

‘According to legend, the unicorn would go to sleep on the maiden’s lap where it would be cut down by hunters.’

As expected, the unicorn propped its chin on Roco’s knee and fell asleep while listening.

“Okay. Now. Deimos, Dedric. Gently approach at a crawl from three directions. Don’t move hastily until I give you a signal.”

“I understand. I don’t like that bastard.”

Clack clack.....

Deimos and Dedric also found the unicorn quite disagreeable. Anyway, Ark and his summons narrowed the distance from three directions. Just as they were a few metres away, the sound of broken leaves was heard from Deimos’

direction. The sound was like a small needle dropping. However, the unicorn stood up with its ears pricked.

‘Oh damn, why is that guy’s ears so sensitive?’

“Deimos, Dedric. Now!”

When Ark raised his voice, Deimos and Dedric immediately rushed forward. The unicorn was surprised and tried to retreat. It alternated looking between Roco and Ark.

Were they working together? Its glowing eyes seemed to ask.

He was angry at the unicorn while Roco felt guilty and avoided its eyes while crying. It seemed to have felt betrayed. However, Ark wasn’t about to listen to the complaints of a monster.

“That’s it. Roco, just leave the rest to me.”

“Ooppa. Don’t be too hard on it.”

“Now, go! Dedric, Deimos! Plan A-2!”

“Okay!”

Clack clack clack! Clack clack clack!

Ark surrounded the unicorn and did a combination attack with his pets. The unicorn was surprised and tried to step back. And it made a weird cry while shaking its head, and a space immediately warped behind it. When the situation became worse, it tried to escape.

“Don’t miss, Dedric!”

“I understand, Dark Dash!”

Dedric flew like crazy and closed the gate. In the end, with its escape blocked, the unicorn changed to battle mode. It was a gentle monster so it was afraid, but Ark didn’t think it was gentle. It was a monster of fantasy after all. Level 250. It wasn’t an opponent to be trifled with. In addition, the

unicorn had speed that couldn't be compared with other monsters.

“Purrruk!”

The unicorn rushed forward like a bull with its horn pointed forward. The speed of the rush was so quick that even Dedric who was a flying monster couldn't follow it.

Kkakak!

Ark blocked it with his sword, but was pushed back a few metres thanks to the heavy force.

‘I thought once I drew it out it would be easy.....but isn’t it surprisingly strong?’

Ark pushed forward and corrected his posture. It was level 250, so he couldn't afford to be careless. But after hunting in the Argus Mountains without any breaks, Ark was now level 151. In addition, the unicorn didn't know that the moon was slowly rising in the sky. With the 40% dark attribute bonus, he was level 211! The stats of his summons had also steadily grown to level 90. Even if it wasn't an easy win, there was no reason for him to lose. The unicorn again rushed forward with its horn.

‘If I pursue it with my eyes then it is already too late. The important thing is feeling!’

It was a word that stayed in his mind after coming home from training with Lee Myung-ryong. Ark caught the timing with his intuition and swung his sword.

Kkakakak, Teteng!

He managed to catch the tempo and blocked the hit. He used Riposte to break the collision and the unicorn was pushed back a few metres. The most important thing in battle has always been timing. He had to take the opportunity whenever there was a chance! He narrowed the distance and

another chain skill burst from Ark's sword.

"Dark Dance!"

The red footprints appeared in the darkness like a film. Ark moved his body quickly and followed along the tracks like a ghost. He had raised his ability in the Argus Mountains. He made sure to use his skills in every fight until he ran out of mana. Because the battles weren't urgent, he could make a dash for recovery after every fight. Thanks to that, his proficiency in various skills had raised considerably. Since he became more proficient in Dark Dance, his percentage of completion significantly increased. His completion percentage was 80%, making his movements very complicated and it seemed like an illusion was created of his body. The unicorn swung his horn in every direction as it became confused. But Ark wasn't hit by the blind attacks. He avoided all the attacks and returned it using Dark Blade. It was the chain skill of Dark Dance and Dark Blade! Liquid flowed from the body of the unicorn.

"Hahaha, die! I really hate smooth looking guys like you!"

Dedric who had a complex was working harder than usual. Tadadada.....

Clack clack clack! Deimos also had flames in his eyes as he laughed. Sometimes he was so concentrated on the attack that he ignored Ark's instructions. He seemed to absolutely want the bone from the unicorn's leg. Clearly.....the unicorn was strong. However Dedric was jealous while Deimos wanted the leg bone. And the unicorn wasn't so strong that it could endure Ark's attack who saw it as money.

After 5 minutes, the unicorn was in a critical condition.

After being hit by Ark's Dark Blade, the unicorn staggered and collapsed sideways. The whole body became a deep red as there was a chance for a double critical hit. Ark wasn't the type to miss the opportunity to kill it.

"Hahaha, finally!

Ark laughed as swung his sword downwards.

“Ooppa! No!”

Roco screamed and ran in front of Ark. Ark freaked out and hastily swung the sword so it hit the ground.

“Why, why would you do that? When I was about to strike the final blow and end it?”

“You don’t have to kill the unicorn?”

“What? What is that.....it’s obvious why they’re called monsters. And there is a reason for me to kill the unicorn.”

“You’re not supposed to kill a unicorn! I can’t just watch this beautiful animal die. In addition, the unicorn believed in me.”

Roco shouted as she embraced the hurt unicorn. Ark was puzzled.

‘Damn, I was careless. Wouldn’t Roco be fond of cute and beautiful things?’

He hadn’t thought that far. The unicorn was certainly beautiful. The shape was beautiful enough to fascinate other people. It wasn’t called a unicorn for nothing. The body glowed with a subtle white light. And the big dark eyes seemed to say ‘I’m very gentle.’ That was probably the reason why Roco was in an uproar. However, Ark couldn’t just let the unicorn go. But even if his partner was an NPC, he couldn’t just ignore her and stab the sword in. But the monster was an impudent fellow who made the maiden act strangely.

It was no good! He didn’t mind losing the items and experience the unicorn would drop. But the 1000 teeth from a hook bat. And the 100 corrupted fairy wings! He invested 300 gold into buying that. All that effort and investment would be wasted if he didn’t obtain the unicorn wings.

“.....do you understand? Only that, it isn’t possible for me to conceded because of that!”

“Then oppa can get the horn from it without killing it.”

Ugh, he had no words.

“I can, but.....”

“Then ask the unicorn. The unicorn is gentle. If you explain then it might give it to you.”

“It is a monster.....”

Ark couldn’t understand a thing. No, he didn’t want to understand. However, Ark had lost the chance for a critical hit.

‘Ugh, this, unbelievable.....!’

Ark had used the ‘Drink of Bewitchment’ to increase the charm by 300% to incite the unicorn not himself. Tears flowed down Roco’s face as she clasped her hand to her chest and begged Ark. She looked incredibly beautiful and he had the urge to listen to anything she wanted. It was probably 100% due to the effects of the drink but.....it was like he had swung an axe at his own foot.

“Ah, I understand so stop. If it obediently gives me the horn then I won’t kill it.”

Roco nodded and continued petting the unicorn as she said.

“I’m sorry about the violent handling. But you probably heard that he had a good reason. So do me a favour. Please give a bit of your horn to oppa.”

“Purrruk!”

When the unicorn sneaked a peak at Ark and snorted, he stared back.

‘That guy doesn’t have manners.....!’

Ark became angry and was about to say something when Roco opened her mouth again.

“Please do me a favour. If you are stubborn then I cannot stop oppa. Please help me so that this doesn’t become bad for you. I really don’t want to see you die and become leather.”

Roco told it in a sad voice as the unicorn became silent for a moment. How much time had passed? Suddenly the unicorn lowered its head and a crack appeared before a corner of the horn broke off. The unicorn looked at the broken corner with an unpleasant face before quickly pushing it towards Roco. Then it turned its eyes to Ark and snubbed him.

‘I’m not giving it because of you!’ it seemed to say.

“Oppa, is it okay now?”

“Sheesh, I guess I can’t kill it anymore.”

Then Dedric who was watching raised his voice angrily.

“No way! Why do we have to let a guy like that live? Master, where is the temper you showed when torturing me? You can just catch it and eat it!”

“What lousy things are you saying with that mouth?”

“Aaargh, let me go! This woman!”

Roco pulled Dedric’s mouth who quickly retreated.

“Well, disappear before I change my mind!”

Ark turned his head and didn’t even bother looking at the sight. He had got what he wanted in the end but he wasn’t satisfied with the circumstances. According to the data from the Monster Book, the treasure of the unicorn was the whole body. The leather could be used to make fairly good armour while the bones were materials for weapons. In addition, Deimos couldn’t even receive the leg bone that he wanted. Just having one would’ve increased his stats tremendously. With the unicorn’s speed, his agility would’ve gone up significantly. It was in his grasp only to have to let it go.....he felt like crying from regret. With Ark’s agreement, Roco used ‘Song of Recovery’ on the unicorn.

“You can go now. Don’t be fooled by bad girls like me and live well.”

However, the unicorn hesitated and just wandered around the area.

“Why is that guy hanging around and testing my patience?”

Dedric said while looking annoyed. Ark also didn’t look good. The ‘Drink of Bewitchment’ might still have an effect but was it enough for it to hang around a woman at the risk of dying? His bitterness was showing a little bit. While Ark, Dedric and Deimos, who hadn’t abandoned its regret for the bone, stared at it the unicorn seemed to have made a decision and came back. Then it kneeled before Roco and licked her hand.

Under the steed exchange system, the famous horse Unicorn has sworn allegiance to Roco.

The unicorn is an intelligent and dignified horse. The unicorn can swear allegiance to an innocent maiden once in its lifetime. If the unicorn makes a pledge and it is accepted, it can be summoned through the steed exchange system. As it is a five star mount, it will take you anywhere you want to go at an amazing speed. However, the unicorn doesn’t like fighting so will not appear on the battlefield even when requested by the person it pledged allegiance to.

The Unicorn has pledge itself to you.

- \* When riding the unicorn, you will experience a 1000% increase in movement speed.
- \* When riding the unicorn, you will experience a 100% rise in luck.
- \* When riding a unicorn, you won’t be attacked by monsters.

“Ooppa!”

Roco was astonished and explained the information window to Ark. Ark couldn’t speak as he opened and closed his mouth absentmindedly.

“What, what the?”

It was like earning 1000 gold. And it was because of Roco. Furthermore, the additional effect was enormous. Among the horses being sold, the faster one was the Red Blood horse that only certain professions could use. It only increased movement speed by 500%. However, the unicorn was double that at 1000%!

Even though it couldn't be used on the battlefield, the movement speed was incredible. In addition, monsters couldn't attack when riding a unicorn. But was that all? Wouldn't there be no maintenance cost as it wasn't an ordinary horse? Usually owning a horse was expensive since you had to buy deluxe oats and crops to feed it. If it is sick, then you would have to buy medicine to heal it and when you arrive at a village, you would have to put it in a stable. The cost of maintenance was the same as a decent car. But she got it all for free.....was there a vehicle without a high oil price these days?

Ark never even imagined that his 'Drink of Bewitchment' would give such a huge benefit.

"This bastard.....he was saved so why is he still hanging around?"

"Puruk, Pururuk!"

The unicorn couldn't stand the nonsense and kept on snorting. Anyway, Roco liked the unicorn and immediately ran to it.

"Now it's possible to meet with oppa anytime I want!"

"Puruk?"

The unicorn's face suddenly looked like it was eating poo.

"Hyung-nim, I found it!"

The delinquent said with a glance. Then the big guy stood up and said.

“You’ve found him?”

“Yes, I’ve spent a few nights looking and finally found him.”

“Bring it here!”

The delinquent quickly handed him something. It was a report that had been stuck together with tape. The name of the man who accepted the report was Wang Ho. He was a person who would accept money for a contract to do bad things, and would inflict violence with a pleasant smile. It was to the extent that any delinquent would flee in the other direction when they ran into him. The one who hired Wang ho was someone who knew him from a while ago. He was hired to find out the personal information about the user Ark who participated in the entrance examination for Global Exos.

“It took a longer time than I thought.’

Global Exos was one of the world’s largest corporations. So well-secured that a delinquent like him couldn’t penetrate it. However, Wang Ho soon found an unusual resource. In Global Exos, the reports would go in the shredder after being reviewed. Wang ho had obtained the information by bribing the cleaning service employees and piecing the report together. Then he finally called his younger brother who started putting the reports together.....and he finally found the information that he desired. After almost a month of searching, he had finally found a report with Ark’s name on it.

“Ark.....Kukukuk, you’ve been hiding like a flea.”

However, there was no private data on the report. Instead, the only thing written was the email address. Wang Ho muttered and laughed.

“Well, once the email address is known then its game over. Good work.”

Wang Ho confirmed the email and immediately walked to the phone.

“Hey, how long would it take to figure out personal information from an

email address?”

“It’ll take a couple of days if there is no trouble.”

“Okay, give me the email and I’ll call you when I have everything.

Wang Ho repeated the email with a satisfied smile.

“Now the only thing left is claiming the fee.”

It was a strange twist. In fact, Ark’s reports weren’t even printed for months. If that had continued, they wouldn’t have been able to discover any information about Ark. However, thanks to Ho Myung-hwan’s interest, the reports were printed again and shredded and eventually ended up in Wang Ho’s hands.

“Wow, look at this unicorn!”

The villagers rushed to the square. Roco had returned to Lancel Village riding the unicorn. The people watching were amazed as the unicorn proudly strutted along. The unicorn had almost died before being rescued was mentioned.....now it was accompanying Roco to the village. Of course, Ark had come around. He honestly didn’t want to ride the unicorn. After all, many problems occurred thanks to its personality. However the villagers were excited and gathered like a cloud.

“This, this is a Unicorn!”

It was at that time. Madusein protruded his head to see what was going on and ran out surprised. After admiring the unicorn with his eyes, he approached Ark.

“Don’t tell me you’ve managed to tame a unicorn?”

“Well, it wasn’t me that tamed it.....”

“Then the horns? Where is the unicorn horn?”

“I have it.”

“Will you sell me the horn?”

Madusein asked in a desperate tone.

“You might not know but the unicorn horn is an amazing magic ingredient. But it’s been called a fantasy ingredient because no one has managed to catch a unicorn. I’m prepared to pay a lot of money. 300 gold.....No, 500 gold. Just sell it to me!”

“It’s difficult. I also need to use the unicorn horn.”

When Ark gave a rough explanation, Madusein immediately looked grumpy. However, he sighed a few times before saying.

“So please sell the next horns to me. I’m asking you.”

“What are the next horns?”

“You don’t know?”

Madusein looked at Ark in surprise.

“The unicorn’s horns grow back over time once it is cut.”

“Yes?”

Roco was occupied with the unicorn while Ark’s eyes sparkled. Once it is cut, the horn grows back again! That means that over time, he could cut it off again. It also meant that he could receive 500 gold for the item multiple times. Of course the unicorn had sworn allegiance to Roco and probably wouldn’t be willing to give him its horns. However, Ark had ways around that. Sweet talk, intimidation, confinement, violence and so on.....If it was profit then Ark was willing to use any method.

‘This is unexpected information!’

Ark grinned widely and looked at the unicorn. He no longer thought that the unicorn looked hateful.

“Unicorn, don’t make me hurt you. If you would like to eat then listen to my words.”

“Pururuk?”

Ark turned around and looked intimately at the unicorn while it stared at him with suspicious eyes. However, after a while.....

“Okay, you can go now. Thanks for the ride.”

Roco gave the unicorn a kiss before returned to the steed exchange system. After flirting with the unicorn, Roco disconnected as she had to go to her part time job.

After organizing things, Ark returned to his cabin.

“Stat Window!”

<b>Character Name</b>	Ark	<b>Race</b>	Human
<b>Alignment</b>		Good +250	
<b>Fame</b>	2575 (+500)	<b>Level</b>	151
<b>Profession</b>	Dark Walker		
<b>Title</b>	Cat Knight, Caretaker of All, Jackson’s Hero		
<b>Health</b>	2485 (+150)	<b>Mana</b>	2380
<b>Spiritual Power</b>	100	<b>Strength</b>	304 (+28)
<b>Agility</b>	394 (+35)	<b>Stamina</b>	484 (+20)
<b>Wisdom</b>	53 (+10)	<b>Intelligence</b>	457

<b>Luck</b>	54	<b>Flexibility</b>	52		
<b>Art of Communication</b>	43	<b>Affection</b>	79 (+10)		
<b>Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics</b>		98			
* Equipment item effects					
Guardian Armour of the Merpeople: Water Attribute Resistance +100%, Penalty based on water is nullified.					
Cat Paws (Gloves): Attack Speed +10%, Agility +15, Critical Hit +10%					
Raccoons Pith (Helmet): Agility + 10, Wisdom + 10					
* Set effect: Strength + 10, Agility + 10, Stamina +10, Defense +20					
Warrior's Transcripts (Shoulder Blades): Strength + 13					
Improved Norad Boots (Shoes): Movement Speed + 15%, Evasion + 10%					
Veil of Fire (Mantle): Flame resistance + 50%					
Adelaine's Necklace (Necklace): Defense + 40, Affection +10, 'Blessing of the Sea' available					
Resurrecting Spirit (Ring): Strength + 5, Mana recovery + 5%					
Mind's Eye (Ring): 'Mind's Eye' enabled					
Amulet of Vitality (Bracelet): Health + 50, Health recovers by 5 every 20 seconds					
Gladiator's Honour (Bracelet): Strength, Agility, Stamina +10, Fame +500, Sword-based Skill Growth +5%					
* All abilities will increase by 40% in the dark					
* You have the ability to hide in the darkness (20 minutes duration. Cancelled when you get into combat)					
* Resistance Fear, Darkness, Blind, and Seduction spells is increased by 50%.					
* You can bring out the true abilities from all types of tools.					

He had spent 20 days in the Argus Mountains. All his hard work was rewarded. Now he was over the level 150 restriction on Magaro's quest. But was that all? Although it was a laborious process, he now had all the ingredients necessary to complete the 'Slime's Immortality Pill.' He still

hadn't found the location of the 'Sacred Soil,' but it knew that it wasn't possible to look for it immediately.

"Now, let's get started?"

Ark opened the personal safe that was in the cabin. He had kept the tooth of a hook bat, the Mandragora and the corrupted fairy wings in the safe. He took all the ingredients out and piled it on the table. Ark looked at the ingredients with warm eyes and took out his pot. Now, it was time to create a survival cooking dish!

"20 days and 300 gold went into this. It better not be some medium item!"

Ark prayed as he began to put the ingredients in one by one. First, he put in the Slime's Essence which melted to a shining liquid in an instant. After he added the rest of the ingredients, the liquid started shining even more intensely as it simmered. After he finally added the unicorn horn, five colourful halos rose from the liquid and a message window appeared.

You have gathered all the necessary ingredients to create 'Slime's Immortality Pill. Now it is time to start the immortality process.

Mixing = Crystallization= Maturation, once it goes through these 3 stages then it is complete. The estimated duration is 72 hours.

### Stage 1 mixing process.

The ingredients in the Slime's Immortality Pill have magical qualities that are contrary to each other. If there is a slightest mistake in mixing then all the efforts so far would be wasted. Special attention is required to ensure that all ingredients are mixed correctly until the process is finished.

<Once the brilliance of the liquid becomes a little muddy, you have to shake the pot and mix the ingredients together.>

The abilities of the immortality pill can vary by how well it is mixed.=  
Mixing time remaining: 2 hours

“What the? It could also fail? After all that trouble?”

Ark looked in astonishment at the information window. He had though all the trouble was finished, but now it was different.

“Damn, if I do it this way then it’ll be done by tomorrow.....Even though I haven’t slept for 30 hours, I have to stare at this pot for 2 hours? In addition, it would take 72 hours to finish?”

However, he had already started to boil the ingredients. Now he had to stare at the pot for 2 hours if he wanted to create the Slime’s Immortality Pill. Ark stared at the pot with bloodshot eyes. And if he saw even a slight dullness in the shine then he would shake the pot uncontrollably. The results of his hard work so far depended on the next 2 hours!

“Even if I have to bit my tongue, I will create the best Immortality Pill!”

The Cathedral dungeons in Selebrid.

In the dark and drab atmosphere, a hobbit was sitting in jail with a soulless expression. It was Sid, Ark’s sales agent. He was unexpectedly sitting inside a jail underneath the cathedral. Of course, the reason he had a soulless expression was because Sid had left the unit in reality. Once users were stuck in jail, there was nothing for them to do. However, users had to be confined in jail for a certain number of days before they could disconnect. Sid also left the unit connected while he did other things. How much time had passed? Suddenly the cage was opened and a guard entered.

“Number 1590, Nein. You’ve received permission to leave.

“Whew, I’m lucky.”

The merchant who was sitting near Sid let out a sigh of relief. And after a moment in the prison, Sid trembled and blinked. Nein stopped and smiled at Sid.

“Ah, Sid-nim. You came back. Although we’ve only spent 2 days together, I would’ve been sorry to leave without saying goodbye.....”

“You’re going out?”

“Yes, yesterday I called a friend to bail me out. He arrived just now. Wasn’t Sid-nim sentenced to life imprisonment? It might be hard but I hope the misunderstanding is resolved.

Sid blinked his eyes as he suddenly remembered something.

“Come to think of it. Are you going to travel near Jackson?”

“Yes, because I was stuck in jail the schedule is a little late, but I will drop in there once.

“Is it possible for you to drop by a small village called Lancel Village while you’re there?”

“Lancel?”

“Yes, there is a person that I know there. That person doesn’t know that I’m stuck in jail. So can you drop by while in Jackson and let him know my situation.”

“But the schedule is tight.....”

“Please, I’m begging you. I don’t know his phone number. The moment I leave I’ll deposit 30 gold into your account at the Merchant’s Guild. I’ll give you my phone number. If you check your phone now then you can confirm that it is me called you.”

Sid begged with tears in his eyes. Once he was stuck in prison then his entire luggage was temporarily confiscated. Nein thought for a while before nodding. 30 gold for a quick stop on the way to Jackson. It was a decent

compensation. He didn't have to worry about fraud since he had Sid's phone number.

"Yes, I understand."

Nein noticed the guards gesturing him to leave so Sid immediately gave him a message.

"Ark is definitely in Lancel Village. Please tell him about my situation."

TO BE CONTINUED